

2001

An examination of the unlikely success of Whoopi Goldberg as a new kind of movie icon

Wendi Ann Hodgen
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Hodgen, Wendi Ann, "An examination of the unlikely success of Whoopi Goldberg as a new kind of movie icon" (2001). *Master's Theses*. 2219.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.e2w3-pe2u>

https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/2219

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

**ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]

AN EXAMINATION OF THE UNLIKELY SUCCESS OF WHOOP!
GOLDBERG AS A NEW KIND OF MOVIE ICON

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Television, Radio, Film and Theatre

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Wendi Ann Hodgen

December 2001

UMI Number: 1407295

**Copyright 2001 by
Hodgen, Wendi Ann**

All rights reserved.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 1407295

Copyright 2002 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

**All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

**ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346**

©2001

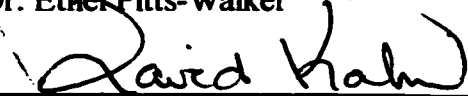
Wendi Ann Hodgen


ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF TELEVISION, RADIO, FILM AND

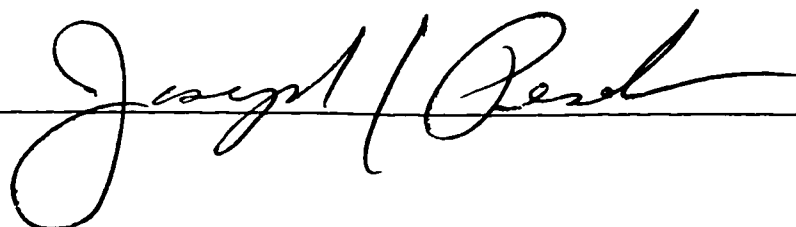
THEATRE


Dr. Ethel Pitts-Walker


Dr. David Kahn


Prof. Buddy Butler

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY



San Jose State University

Abstract

AN EXAMINATION OF THE UNLIKELY SUCCESS OF WHOOP
GOLDBERG AS A NEW KIND OF MOVIE ICON

by Wendi Ann Hodgen

This thesis addresses the unlikely success of Whoopi Goldberg as a Hollywood film star. It examines her comedic style, filmic sexuality, female stereotypes, and challenges and successes of her career as a black actress.

Research on this subject reveals that Whoopi Goldberg has definitely reached a supremacy among Black female stars and has become a new kind of movie icon. She began her film career ten years after the Blaxploitation period (1970-1975). Although her debut film, *The Color Purple* was a drama, her comedic style provided a unique quality on screen and she immediately became known as a comedic actress. Her filmic sexuality has not revealed her as a sexy, romantic leading lady as she desires. She has portrayed stereotypical roles such as the Mammy, but has also created two new screen types, Fontaine and the female buddy/sidekick. And last, she insists that she be credited solely as an actress.

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Number</i>	<i>Page</i>
Fig 1 Carole Lombard – From the Carole Lombard web site.....	3
Fig 2 Carole Lombard – From the Carole Lombard web site.....	4
Fig 3 <i>Sister Act</i> (1992) video cover.....	8
Fig 4 cover of <u>Book</u> . (1997).....	18
Fig 5 Whoopi Goldberg (1985) Fontaine.....	31
Fig 6 Lily Tomlin, head shot 1986 – IMBd.com.....	35
Fig 7 Foxx <u>The Redd Foxx Encyclopedia of Black Humor</u>	37
Fig 8 <i>Jumpin' Jack Flash</i> photo of Goldberg.....	38
Fig 9a <i>Corrina, Corrina</i> (1994) video capture.....	50
Fig 9b <i>Corrina, Corrina</i> (1994) video capture.....	50
Fig 10 <i>Fatal Beauty</i> (1987) video cover.....	53
Fig 11 <i>Made in America</i> (1993) video capture.....	57
Fig 12 <i>The Rich Man's Wife</i> (1996) video capture.....	61
Fig 13 Bogle, Donald. <u>Brown Sugar: Eighty Years of America's Black Female Superstars</u>	75
Fig 14 <i>The Long Walk Home</i> (1990) video cover.....	76
Fig 15 Parish, <u>Whoopi Goldberg: from Poverty to Mega Stardom</u>	94

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank Dr. Ethel Pitts-Walker for her time and encouragement, Professor Buddy Butler, Dr. David Kahn and Dr. Karl Toepfer for their expertise and efforts. Georgie and Leanne for their inspiration; Brenda, Ralph and Natalie Hodgen; Margaret, Hoover and Maleka Liddell; Julie Isaac, Carol Williams-DeGrace, Forrest and Dorothy Williams, Kim McGowan, Sharon Jennings, Dr. P and all the other Graduate students and friends for their belief, support and understanding. And Joel D. Smith for his editing skills and getting me over the last hurdle.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1	
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	16
Definition of Terms.....	19
Chapter 2	
Examination of Goldberg's Comedic Style.....	22
Chapter 3	
Examination of Goldberg's Filmic Sexuality.....	42
Chapter 4	
Examination of Whoopi Goldberg's Success in Avoiding Stereotypes.....	65
New Stereotypes Specific to Goldberg.....	72
The effect of Stereotypes.....	74
The Mammy.....	75
Why Stereotypes Persist.....	79
Chapter 5	
Conclusion.....	89
Bibliography.....	95
Appendix A.....	100

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sight & Sound explores the extraordinary and unlikely success of Whoopi Goldberg as a different kind of Black female movie icon. Andrea Stuart's article acknowledges Goldberg's solitary supremacy in the history of Black females in Hollywood: Black women's representation in American cinema; Two types of cinematic colored girl; Goldberg's success in avoiding female stereotypes; Role in *Jumpin' Jack Flash*; Criticisms and accolades for Goldberg's role in the film *The Color Purple*.¹

“Has Whoopi Goldberg become a different kind of Black female movie icon?”

Has Goldberg achieved and maintained solitary supremacy in the history of Black females in Hollywood?

This last question is the lead question in a 1993 Sight & Sound article by Andrea Stuart. What is most interesting about this article is the fact that I obtained it in April 2000, a year after starting this research. Amazingly, her statements are pretty much right on target with my findings 7 years after the publication of her article.

Stuart discusses several factors regarding Goldberg's career as well as the careers of other Blacks in film. She begins by highlighting the pioneers of Black roles, such as Hattie McDaniel and her roles as the mammy. Stuart adds

¹ Andrea Stuart, “Making Whoopi”, Sight & Sound Feb. 1993: 12.

Goldberg's choices, such as the role of Celie in *The Color Purple* (1985) and Terry Doolittle in *Jumpin' Jack Flash* (1986). Reacting to the statement "...how to make a movie without using Whoopi to play 'all the major roles'.", Andrea Stuart states, "it [the article] is an oblique acknowledgement of Goldberg's solitary supremacy in the curious history of the black female in Hollywood".² She states that Goldberg's "unique success [is] to have avoided both female stereotypes." She also attributes Goldberg's success to the sexuality of Goldberg's roles and her comedic style. These three topics are the major concerns in this research of Whoopi Goldberg's career.

Whoopi Goldberg, actress, producer and center square occupant has revived the game show, "Hollywood Squares." Representative of the pinnacle of stardom, the center square has housed the best in the entertainment and comedic industry, including Paul Lynn. Hollywood stardom is a dream for many young aspiring actresses. Famous actors often talk of their first role or the many rejections they endured during their struggle to become stars. Whoopi Goldberg is one actress whose "struggle" to reach stardom happened after she won a Best Supporting Actress Academy Award. Goldberg "acknowledged that she didn't have to struggle to get in. 'It was sort of handed to me on a silver platter. The obstacles one has to conquer come after one gets in the business. I had to conquer

² Stuart 12.

the idea that everybody thought I looked odd and sounded odd and was trying to be something I wasn't.”³

As a child, Whoopi Goldberg dreamed of becoming a star. In her Oscar acceptance speech, Goldberg exclaimed, “Ever since I was a little kid, I’ve wanted this. As a little kid, I lived in the projects and you’re the people I watched. You’re the people that made me want to be an actor.”⁴ She used to disappear to the movies to watch Carole Lombard and other actresses float down the staircases with their long satin gowns. Although Goldberg rarely saw a reflection of her physical self on the silver screen, she could imagine it. She would imagine everyday people like herself living those fairytale lives created by Hollywood. “As a child, Goldberg had dreams of seeing ‘normal-looking people’ on the screen and imagined herself ‘coming downstairs in silver lamè like Carole Lombard,’ or ‘playing a swashbuckling pirate-detective.’”⁵



Figure 1 Carole Lombard

³ Linda Armstrong, “Whoopi Goldberg Opens at James Theater in ‘Funny thing Happened’” New York Amsterdam News Mar. 1997: 21.

⁴ “Whoopi Goldberg: Second Black Actress To Win An Oscar In 52 Years,” Jet Apr. 22 1991: 55.

⁵ Jill Kearney 25.



Figure 2 Carole Lombard

Young Black females have a unique journey to stardom compared to their White counterparts. To fully understand this journey, we must first ask ourselves, what makes it different for Blacks? What challenges do Black actresses face that others do not? According to actress Robin Givens, “Some say it’s racism; some say it’s benign neglect; while others say the problem is a lack of imagination and vision by the White males who run Hollywood. The truth, I think, is it’s probably all three.”⁶

Interviews and articles by and about Black actresses reveal the prejudices and obstacles these women face. The lack of substantial roles available, type casting, cutting scenes, and ignorance of the nuances of being female and Black in Hollywood are typical challenges for these women. Whoopi Goldberg, in particular, has spoken candidly about her experiences, yet she is one of the

highest paid and most influential actresses in the entertainment industry. There is very little discourse in the area of the struggle of the Black actress. Unfortunately, the world of academia has not traversed this important territory; however, the lack of scholarly writing provides fresh ground for this research.

The discoveries of this research will provide a much-needed starting point for discourse among performers, educators and filmmakers on the subject of the influence of type and talent on the career of Whoopi Goldberg. This research will be of particular use to Black female students preparing for the world of Hollywood. Finally, this discourse can be used to provoke further discussion and research into the inclusion of Black females in mainstream film.

The examination of type is the essential factor in Goldberg's career because she has broken through barriers that have been impenetrable for other Black actresses. Additionally, she has managed to achieve financial success, critical acclaim as a performer, tremendous influence as a political activist and humanist, and high rank among powerful producers and film executives. Journalist Bebe Moore Campbell states, "But Whoopi has arguably come much closer to that kind of A-list primacy than any other African-American film star in history. If she hasn't climbed to the very top of the Hollywood mountain yet, she certainly has the guts to get there."⁷ Oprah Winfrey is just as successful a producer, Ruby Dee has a phenomenal acting resume, and other Black actresses

⁶ Robin Givens, "Why Are Black Actresses Having Such a Hard Time In Hollywood?" *Ebony* June 1991: 38.

⁷ Bebe Moore Campbell, "Whoopi Talks B(l)ack," *Essence* Jan. 1997: 58.

have displayed their talents, but Goldberg has achieved stardom and fame unsurpassed by other Black females in her field. A Black actress has never won a Best Actress Oscar, and Whoopi Goldberg is the only Black actress to win an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress since 1939 when Hattie McDaniel won the Best Supporting Actress Academy Award for her role as Mammy in *Gone With the Wind*.

In the June 1993 McCall's interview with Deborah Norville, Goldberg discusses breaking barriers:

Norville: This movie (*Made in America*) breaks type for you, because it's a romance.

Goldberg: You know when I said [to studio executives, in the past], "Gee, I'd like to, you know, act with Dustin Hoffman," they'd go, "Well you can only do a comedy. You can't do a love story because nobody's ready for [an interracial love story]."

Norville: You've broken another barrier as well—a very impressive one.

Goldberg: At this moment in time, I am the highest-paid woman in Hollywood.⁸

Although Goldberg was the highest paid actress in Hollywood at that time, she still did not have the power or clout to include scenes of her choice, namely love scenes. To date she still has not had a love scene appear in her films. One would expect that the highest paid actress has reached that position due to skill or popularity and therefore should have a certain amount of control over the content of her films.

In order to incorporate the experiences and discussion of other stars, the term "star" needs to be defined. In his text Stars Richard Dyer defines stardom by

⁸ Norville.

dividing his text into 3 parts: stars as social phenomenon, stars as images, and stars as signs.

Secondly, the factors needed to be determined. What is a star? For the purposes of this research, a star is qualified by the following items. A star must be able to earn an exorbitant amount of money. According to Goldberg, "If your last twenty movies made \$200 million, you have power in Hollywood. Other than that you're a hired hand. You can't equate the fact that you make money as an actor with the fact that you have power".⁹ In his book, Nicholas Kent quotes Ned Taner as saying, "A star has two things that an actor doesn't have: charisma and the ability to sell tickets." According to Taner, "Eddie Murphy will sell tickets around the world to a movie that is not a very good movie. That is a movie star." He continues, "In Hollywood, a star is defined as an actor who can 'open' a movie. 'Opening' a movie is Hollywood lingo for the ability to entice sufficient numbers of people who will pay to see the movie during its first weekend."¹⁰ The power of the pen is a second factor. The press will often inform the public of who has reached stardom. The third factor is billing on a film. A star is anyone who has achieved top billing, which consists of being named in the beginning of the film, having one's name listed on the theatre poster, and being named in the opening credits. Of course, the order in which one's name appears is also important. Whoopi Goldberg, for example, is often listed first or second in her

⁹ James Robert Parish, Whoopi Goldberg (New Jersey: Carol Publishing Group, 1997) 314.

films. In reference to *The Long Walk Home* (1990) Goldberg states, “I was above the title. They weren’t paying me a whole lot of money, but I was above the title”¹¹ The fourth factor involves the script. If a script is written specifically for the actress, it qualifies her as a star as well. *Theodor Rex* (1995) and *Sister Act II: Back in the Habit* (1993) were both written specifically for Goldberg.

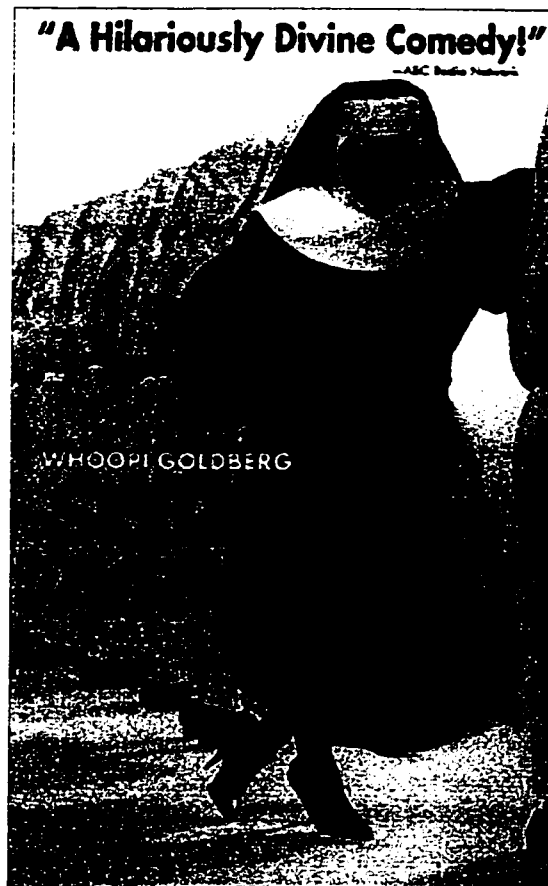


Figure 3 Goldberg in *Sister Act*, video cover

¹⁰ Nicholas Kent, *Naked Hollywood* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991) 79.

¹¹ Whoopi Goldberg, *Book* (New York: Avon Books, Inc., 1997) 130.

The thesis uses a qualitative method, combining films, magazine articles, scholarly journals, biographies, autobiographies, and statistical research.

Fortunately, the opportunity arose to discuss “type” and career obstacles with actors Mimi Kennedy and Alan Rachins of the prime time show “Dharma and Greg.” It is important to include information from the perspective of “White” actors to research the similarities and differences in casting obstacles for Blacks and Whites. The “White” actors may in reality be Jewish or of other White-looking ethnicities but are able, due to their physiognomy, to fill the role of a “White” character. This will be further discussed in chapter three.

The thesis has five chapters. Chapter one, the introduction, discusses the need for this thesis, includes a definition of terms, and includes a review of the literature. Chapter two explores Goldberg’s career as a stand-up comedienne. In order to understand Whoopi Goldberg’s success as a new movie icon, it is vital to explore the beginning of her career. Although her acting career began on the stage, it did not blossom until she performed her one-woman show in Berkeley, California. From that performance, she became known (via the media) as a comedienne. At the inception of her career, Goldberg was said to be “The performer, whom critics have compared to Richard Pryor and Lily Tomlin.”¹² This chapter includes an analysis of her comedic style as observed in video recordings of her comedy show from 1984 and 1985. Although reviews and articles of her one-woman show provide substantial information, the videos

¹² People Weekly May 28 1984: 72.

provide the most adequate resource for analysis. An examination of early Black comedians and female comedians gives the historical trend, allowing appropriate information leading to an answer to the question: Did Goldberg establish a new comedic style? Did her style (new or copied) make her a “movie icon “?

Chapter three discusses the sexuality of Goldberg’s film characters. The research identifies problems Goldberg faces in Hollywood in regards to her “type” and the question of race identification. It also discusses the specific problems she faced in the areas of Hollywood “starlet” physiognomy. Several questions are answered that lead to determining whether she has achieved solitary supremacy in the history of Black females in Hollywood. Examples from *Made in America* (1993) provide answers to most of these questions. Does Goldberg’s refusal to identify herself as African-American raise new issues in Hollywood? Does her racial self-identification affect the success of her career? She has performed in a variety of roles traditionally reserved for Whites or Hollywood standard attractive actors, yet she neither physically nor socially represents the “Barbie doll starlet.” How did she do it? In an Ebony article, “Why are Black Actresses Having Such a Hard time in Hollywood?” Robin Givens refers to the “industry’s myopic and narrow-minded obsession with the ‘Barbie doll starlet.’” What most people don’t realize is that anytime you see a Black woman in a movie, on television, even in a commercial, she’s worked hard to be there. As

Whoopi Goldberg said to me during a recent interview, ‘We [Black actresses] just do not leap to mind.’”¹³

When one explores Goldberg’s unique strategies for overcoming typecasting, two important factors emerge. First, there are a minimal number of roles available to Black females in film and television, restricting the variety of roles available. Secondly, Goldberg has a unique look and talent, which seems to appeal to a variety of audiences. In October 1996, Jet magazine published results from a Screen Actors Guild study, reporting “Black actresses received 13 percent of female roles in 1995.”¹⁴ For example, Backstage West dedicates a section for available film, stage and commercial roles which are listed with racial, physical, and age specifications. In the last five issues there has been a very minute number of roles listed for Black women. Considering the many films released in the last four months, a very small percentage feature a Black female in the starring role. Yet, Goldberg has managed to appear in over 36 films and star in over 17. She commented on her contribution to preserving stereotypes in her autobiography Book: “I sometimes wonder whether the choices I make as a Black actress contribute in some way to the prevailing stereotypes, but then I realize it’s not all on me. I can take any role I want, or reject any role I want, for any reason I want.”¹⁵

¹³ Givens 37-38.

¹⁴ “Whoopi Goldberg: Second Black Actress To Win An Oscar in 52 Years,” Jet 61.

¹⁵ Whoopi Goldberg, Book (New York: Avon Books, Inc., 1997) 130.

As Givens reports, “There have been instances when she’s endured painful backlashes because of her desire to be a nonconformist. Such as the time when the White studio executive touched her dreadlocked hair and said, ‘What are we going to do with this?’”¹⁶ Goldberg has maintained her physical individuality, which she admits has been challenged constantly during her career. She is very aware that many consider her unattractive by industry standards. Journalist Bebe Moore Campbell described Goldberg as “an unlikely star. Too everything to make it to the Big Time: Too dark, of course, hair too nappy; looks too unconventional, according to the naysayers, the dream crushers. She’s had to deal with the you-don’t-look-like-a-leading-lady syndrome in a system that’s designed to recognize people who are her opposites.”¹⁷ Yet, she continues to pursue roles that are outside of her “type”. The well-known proverb, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” may be politically correct, but there is an established standard of beauty in Hollywood defined by the power structure, the producers.

Actress Rae Dawn Chong empathizes with Goldberg and believes, “Perhaps it will take each of us working harder.” Perhaps, as Chong observes, they can turn the obstacles into advantages. She explains:

The disadvantages that we have in the industry really work toward our benefit, because it’s forcing me to do stuff that I may not have done had I been able to do Julia Roberts’ roles. I’ve got to learn to produce. I’ve got to be smarter and better. Not only do I have to be a good actress, but I’ve got to be a brilliant strategist and a brilliant businesswoman.¹⁸

¹⁶ Givens 37.

¹⁷ Campbell 58.

¹⁸ Givens 40.

Along with her struggle to overcome the leading lady standard, Goldberg also struggles to overcome being classified as an African-American actress as opposed to just an actress. She has on several occasions refused to identify herself as an African-American. She insists on being classified as an actress void of any racial identification. Does Goldberg's refusal to identify herself as African-American raise new issues in Hollywood? Does her racial self-identification make a difference in her career? In an interview with Katie Couric from the *Today Show*, she discussed her identification with being African-American as incorrect. She has stated that she is American.

“Asked by increasingly liberal NBC ‘Today’ host Katie Couric why she hates being called ‘African-American,’ Goldberg replied, ‘I don’t hate it, it just doesn’t apply to me. I am an American. With all the responsibilities that it takes to be an American. And with all the right to everything this country has to offer. And as soon as you hyphenate it, it’s like you’re not a full American. And my culture is here.’”¹⁹

The issue seems to be unending for Goldberg, “who denies her connection to Africa by saying, “Don’t call me an African American, I am an American.”²⁰ Dr. Ronald Walters continues to argue that although she and other Blacks make this claim, others do not perceive that they are strictly American. “But then, the irony is that they are not regarded by the movie industry or its

¹⁹“African American Not!,” Human Events 17 Oct. 1997: 32.

patrons as merely 'American' actors,"²¹ writes Walters. Director Melvin Van Peebles of *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971) stated, "As long as the hand holding the money has the same old racial stereotypes, the playing field is not level. [The studio's] demand that we do a certain type of work, which they then will say is what the people want."²²

Goldberg grew up in an ethnically diverse neighborhood, which she described as: "The whole neighborhood looked out for each other. There was a real mix on our street: White people. Black people. Spanish people. Chinese people. Italian people. We didn't see Black and white then, not in my neighborhood. Movies were movies. There weren't Black movies or white movies. It was all one fantasy."²³

Chapter 4 examines Goldberg's struggle to break barriers in regards to stereotypical roles. This chapter includes discussion of a selection of representative roles. Discussion of all her roles would be a book within itself. Her roles as maid/nanny in *Clara's Heart* (1988) and *Corrina, Corrina* (1994) and as the quirky psychic in *Ghost* (1990) and amateur sleuth in *Jumpin' Jack Flash* are thoroughly examined. Also discussed is Goldberg's approach to gender-specific roles and her ability to engage in cross-gender performances, specifically

²⁰ Ronald Walters, Ph.D., "Race in America: Multiculturalism, Afrocentrism, and the New Democratic Framework," Black Collegian Apr. 1996: 32.

²¹ Walters 32.

²² Tim Carvell, "Moving Beyond 'Booty Call': Stereotype-Free Black films," Fortune 16 Mar. 1998: 35.

²³ Goldberg 47-53.

in *The Associate* (1996). Goldberg received mixed reviews from critics for her portrayal of a white male in *The Associate*. Roger Ebert's review of the movie was unfavorable, as he criticized the film, but not necessarily Goldberg. He wrote, "Goldberg's Mr. Cutty, made out of latex and makeup, looks very odd. Maybe Goldberg wanted to play a white man just to prove a point, but if she'd made Cutty a Black man, she could have made a more provocative point, and probably looked more convincing at the same time."²⁴ Arguably, the narrative was about the disadvantages of being a Black female in a White male dominated profession. The contrast was needed to substantiate the narrative.

The final chapter summarizes the three previous chapters, concluding that Goldberg has achieved solitary supremacy in the history of Black females in Hollywood. It summarizes the answers and conclusions stated in chapters 2, 3 and 4. Most importantly, it poses questions that can only be answered later in Goldberg's career or possibly by research specific to psychology and sociology. Additionally, it exposes inconclusive genres and presents areas of future exploration.

²⁴ Roger Ebert, "The Associate," Chicago-Sun Times 1996.

Literature Review

Previous discourse exists for films from as far back as D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1913) through the Blaxploitation films of the 1970's. Although extensive research and studies of Blacks in film exist, a vast majority focuses on films from the "Blaxploitation" era and before. Donald Bogle's book, Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks offers extensive historical and theoretical research on the stereotyping of Blacks in film. His results provide the history of Black actors in film and character stereotypes as well as Hollywood and society's part in shaping the portrayal of Blacks. This text offers important discourse on the stereotypical roles of Blacks in film, aiding in determining whether Goldberg has avoided, maintained, or possibly created new stereotypes. He provides clear definition and origination of the five principal stereotypes: Tom, Coon, Mulatto, Mammy and Buck. Crucial background information on the careers of major Black film stars from the 1920's to 1980's provides the chronological shaping of stereotypical characterization. Bogle's text Brown Sugar: Eighty Years of America's Black Female Superstars interprets the lives and careers of Black actresses from the early 1900's to the late 1970's. This text seems to be the only significant discourse dedicated to the lives and careers of Black female stars from stage to screen. It offers a historical account of the development of Black females in film as well as the challenges they faced. Unfortunately, a more up-to-date version of his analysis is not available. Additional experts are needed to aid in

distinguishing between generalized and specific ideologies but were not discovered.

James Robert Parish has written several books about Black stars, but his research and analysis are not as academically extensive as Bogle's. Parish does, however, present extensive biographical information on stars such as Whoopi Goldberg and Halle Berry. His biography Whoopi Goldberg, Her Journey from Poverty to Megastardom provides thorough background information from Goldberg's childhood to her present standing in Hollywood. Parish's text and in Book describe her personal opinions and attitude.

Goldberg's self-authored Book, although biographical, is more of a revelation of her attitudes to information that is more candid, but Book is her voice rather than an interpretation or paraphrase from a journalist. The chapter titled "Race" discloses her views regarding stereotypical roles, specifically the mammy, which is discussed in chapter four of this thesis. In Book's chapter seven, titled "Eggs," she tells a story of her refusal to eat eggs as a child. This chapter provides clear understanding for Goldberg's tenacity as an adult. In Book she is direct and to the point, providing personal stories intertwined with personal opinions.

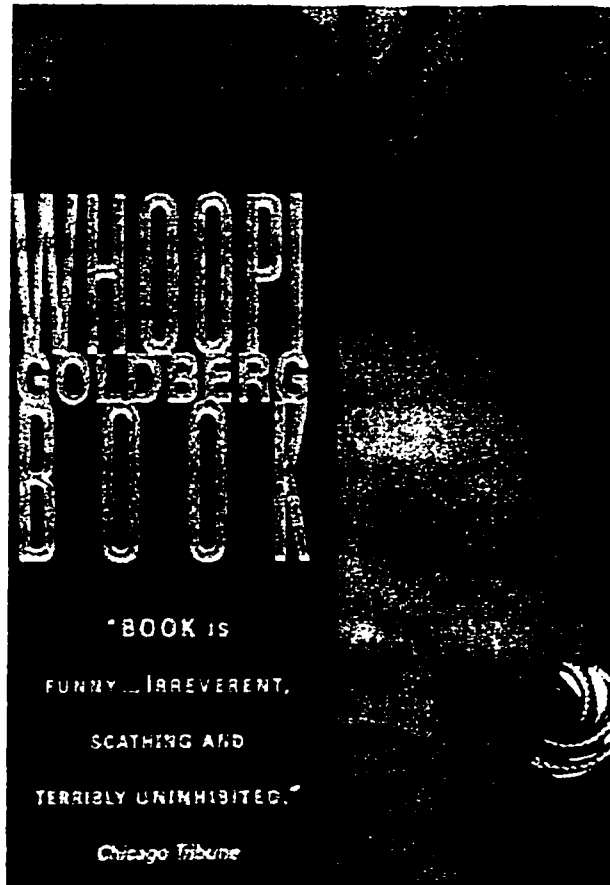


Figure 4 Cover of Goldberg's Book.

Definition of Terms

Articles regarding racial stereotypes and image in film do exist, but there is very little on the topic of the effects of type versus talent in obtaining work in Hollywood. Type is a very important factor in the study of Whoopi Goldberg's success. As a means of categorizing actors, casting agents, directors and managers use the term "type." In this thesis, "type" is defined as the stereotypical physiognomy of a generalized group of people used by casting agents and other film and theatre executives to create a desired cast of characters for a film or play. The definition is a derivative from various dictionaries and acting texts. To date, a clear, published definition is not available. Type is a classification, a method of categorizing actors. In NTC's Dictionary of Theatre and Drama Terms, Jonnie Mobley, Ph.D., defines typecasting as "the casting of roles in a play by choosing actors who most closely resemble the physical and personality descriptions of the characters."²⁵ For example, a tough guy "type" is defined as a tall, muscular male with a deep voice and unkempt hair. Acting texts such as Acting: Onstage and Off usually include a paragraph or two about finding one's type or going against type: "By now you have a clearer idea of how others see you, whether that is the person inside or not. You're foolish to fight your type, and you're foolish to accept it."²⁶ This is different from the term "stereotype." Referring

²⁵ Mobley, Jonnie Patricia, Ph.D., NTC's Dictionary of Theatre and Drama Terms (Chicago: NTC Publishing, 1992) 156.

²⁶ Robert Barton, Acting: Onstage and Off (Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1993) 103.

again to Mobley, “Stereotype. A character based on an assumption that all members of a particular race, creed, or class behave in the same way, so that a few devices—an accent, a religious article, jargon words—serve to delineate the character.”²⁷ These are two distinctly different terms. Actors are selected based on their intrinsic characteristics that happen to fit a type, whereas stereotype is the action of conforming to a standard. An actor who fits a certain type may be chosen for a specific stereotypical role. “Type” describes the actor’s versatility; “stereotype” refers to the character role. Has Goldberg broken “type?” This thesis examines Goldberg’s career success and the diversity of her roles as they apply to type. According to professor and film author, Valerie Smith, “Others have argued that the images of African Americans found in *Birth [of a Nation]* and reproduced throughout the history of U.S. cinema—types that run the gamut from indolent, subservient, buffoonish men and women to vicious black male rapists—have set the terms of black-directed narrative film.”²⁸

To further drive this point, an essay by book reviewer Kevin Hagopian states:

Reid claims that most Black imagery created by the Hollywood film industry, regardless of constant repackaging as new and enlightened visions of African Americana, is simply a variation on blackface minstrelsy, caricatures of Black life developed for the screen in its earliest days and arising out of Black stage minstrel traditions of the 19th century.²⁹

²⁷ Mobley 142.

²⁸ Valerie Smith, Representing Blackness: Issues in Film and Video (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1997) 1.

²⁹ Kevin Hagopian, “Black Cinema Studies: Shadows and Acts,” Journal of Communication (1995): 178.

Due to the current arguments on the issue of feminism, in this document the terms “feminine” and “masculine” need to be clarified as well. Webster’s Dictionary defines “feminine” as womanly, which in turn is an adjective used to describe someone or something that shows qualities traditionally associated with women. For example, qualities of softness in one’s gait, hair, voice and features are feminine. Grace and warmth are other valid qualities. Many may argue that this definition is a generalization; of course, it is. For the purpose of discussion in this research, the traditional and general feminine qualities, especially the extremes, provide a foundation and establish the standard for comparison. The opposite of course is masculine, defined as qualities traditionally associated with men, such as muscular strength, a deliberate stride, stomping, fighting, and obscene language. In order to establish a clear argument and explanation of Goldberg’s type, roles and qualities, these terms will serve solely as markers and not as definitions of all women or men.

The last term, Fontaine, is a newly established term constructed from one of Goldberg’s most popular characters from her one-woman show. Fontaine is a male drug addict who wears sunglasses and a handkerchief wrapped around his forehead. He says he stays high because he cannot find a job. Fontaine is a street-wise; college-educated black man who delivers truth in a blunt, in-your-face manner. Further examination of this term is discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2

EXAMINING GOLDBERG'S COMEDIC STYLE

Though critics have compared Whoopi Goldberg to Richard Pryor, Eddie Murphy, Lily Tomlin, and Elaine May, Goldberg considers herself an actor; she bristles at the term 'comediienne.'³⁰

This chapter explores Goldberg's style as a comedic actress, analyzes her comedy as a comediienne and compares it to that of other comedians. It presents a chronological progression and analysis of her career as a comedian. The three areas researched the history of comediennes, the history of Black comedians, and the uniqueness of Goldberg's style. This chapter answers the question: Is Whoopi Goldberg unique in her comedic style?

Goldberg understood early in her career that she had a unique talent and style. She changed her name from Caryn Johnson to Whoopi Goldberg in order to gain more attention. "People hear about this Black female with a wild-ass name, and they want to know what she's all about. There really isn't anyone else who's doing what I do, '."³¹ According to her autobiography, Book, "Whoopi" came from the sound she makes when she laughs. Her mother suggested the surname "Goldberg" as a way of bringing in an audience. What Goldberg was "doing" was an act of 17 characters ranging in age, ethnicity, gender and social standing.

³⁰ Jill Kearney 25.

Goldberg incorporated much of her early experiences of growing up in a diverse neighborhood, a stint with drugs, and poverty into her act. The material from early in her career was a precursor to her personal passions and compassion.

Goldberg's comedy always included a somber realization of life via the character of a junkie or pregnant 13-year-old. Her career led to *Comic Relief* a show co-hosted with Robin Williams and Billy Crystal. This annual fundraiser for America's needy lasted for several years.

Opposed to media conviction, Goldberg did not begin as a standup comic in the 1970's. In a 1985 American Film interview, Jill Kearney inquired:

Kearney: You seem sensitive about being classified as a comedienne.
Goldberg: I've been an actor. Comedy is new in my life. And when you look at people like Richard Pryor or Robin Williams, who's great, or Billy Crystal, they can keep you laughing consistently. They can also put poignancy and heaviness in the material, but they can take an audience for fifteen, twenty minutes and make 'em laugh all the way through. I can't do that.³²

Stand-up comedy has never been an easy or popular vocation for females. In the 1940's Moms Mabley was the only nationally known comedienne of her time. It is still difficult for comediennes to become popular today. Many of them have had to crossover to television and film in order to make a living. Moms Mabley was very successful on the road, traveling with a troupe of male performers. She was usually the only female in the group, thus the nickname

³¹"Up and Coming: with Gags, Gimmicks and Offbeat Props, a New Generation of Comics Shtiks it to Us On their Way to Future Stardom," People Weekly Aug. 13 1984. INFO TRAK.

³² Kearney 26.

Moms. Pearl Bailey, known primarily as a singer, also started performing stand-up comedy in the 1950's.

Goldberg's childhood dream of becoming an actress led her to participate in the Helena Rubinstein Performing Arts Workshops at the Hudson Guild of New York at the age of eight. She continued to perform with the Hudson Guild through her teens. She dropped out of high school in her freshman year but continued to stay involved in theatre. In 1974 Goldberg drove to San Diego, California with her one-year-old daughter, and eventually found work with the San Diego Repertory Theatre in 1980. Before joining the San Diego company, Goldberg faced many auditions and rejections. She was often told that she wasn't seasoned or that they weren't "ready to make that kind of statement."³³ In other words, the theatre companies she auditioned for were not ready to add a Black actor to their cast. Roles for a Black female were not in the plays they were performing, and they did not want to cast her in roles written as a specific ethnicity or race. Goldberg's look and talent was new and different; directors and producers did not know what to do with her. She did not fit a standard. The first company to accept her was the liberal and innovative San Diego Repertory Theatre. Journalist Coleman states, "She was not just the token black member of the cast. Like a seltzer bottle in the desert, she was the only black [improvisational] comedian in all of San Diego County."³⁴ Although the group was liberal, she was still denied roles written for "a comely white woman." She

³³ Parish, Whoopi Goldberg 56.

later performed with the Blake Street Hawkeyes Theatre in Berkeley, California. In 1983 she developed *The Spook Show*, a collection of characters she created and developed through improvisation. *The Spook Show* opened in San Francisco, toured the United States and Europe, and ended at the Dance Theater Workshop in New York. This show led Goldberg to Broadway. Producer Mike Nichols offered to produce *Spook Show* on Broadway. When the show was presented on Broadway, the title was changed from *The Spook Show* to *Whoopi Goldberg* as a result of public protest to the term “spook.” Eventually HBO aired the show as *Whoopi Goldberg* in 1985. Because the performance was predominantly humorous, the media quickly interpreted it as comedy and her as a comedienne. Kearney posed the question to Goldberg:

What was your intention in your Broadway show, if not comedy?
Goldberg: To get work. That was my biggest intention. [Laughs.] That show grew out of desperation. Of people saying, “Well, no, we can’t cast you in this, because, well, heh-heh, you know, you don’t quite . . . uh . . . look like, uh, you know . . .” And I’d go, “What? What don’t I look like?” and they’d say, “Well, frankly, you’re not Barbie.”³⁵

Although she was categorized as a comedienne, Goldberg considers herself an actress. That same year in a People Weekly article Goldberg reemphasizes, “I’m an actor, not a comic. The desperation that comes with being a stand-up comedian is too frightening for me.”³⁶ The desperation she speaks of is evident in the careers of female comedians such as Moms Mabley. Mabley

³⁴ Parish, Whoopi Goldberg 52.

³⁵ Kearney 26.

³⁶ “Whoopi Goldberg,” People Weekly 28 May 1985: 45.

traveled with an all-male vaudeville show, received minimal pay, and stayed in segregated and sometimes run down hotels. The one-woman show was pivotal to Goldberg's fame and was the result of improvisation.

Earlier Black comediennes relied on improvisational skills to maintain their careers. Redd Foxx gives a brief introduction to the history of Black female comediennes in his Encyclopedia of Black Humor:

The list of those [female comics] whose talents were smothered in a housedress or an apron (or both) is long. The easiest way for the Black female performer to escape playing these inane parts was by going the singing route. It was far better to become a singing star, playing the big clubs and getting hit records, than to be subjected to the type of comedic acting that was required of an Aunt Jemima-type. No doubt we lost out on many great performers who might have gone on to become comedy stars were it not for the music business.³⁷

Foxx's statements about Mabley as comedienne are reliable because they traveled and performed together. Born Loretta Mary Aiken (1897), Jackie "Moms" Mabley, was the first Black female stand-up comedienne. The kind, compassionate Loretta traveled with several Black male comedians, such as Redd Foxx, and eventually became "Moms" (the only female in the group). "Traveling the vaudeville circuit she experienced overt racism and demeaning working conditions and deflected her pain through satirical wit that drew heavily from black folk traditions," Moms used her own grandmother as a model for her stage personae. The "granny" image with housedress, apron, floppy hat and toothless grin served as a buffer to resistance from audiences that disapproved of single

women doing stand-up comedy. She also referred to her audience as her “children”, making her more endearing. In 1967, Moms made her television debut in “the all-Black television tribute to Negro humor ‘A time for Laughter.’” In one skit she played,

The maid of an uppity Black bourgeoisie couple (Godfry Cambridge and Diana Sands) trying to be white, living in hoity-toity Westchester (which, ironically enough, was precisely where Moms Mabley was living). Whenever Cambridge and Sands put on airs, there was down-to-earth Moms giving them a look, a grunt, or a groan to remind them of their roots.³⁸

That role was a precursor to what would become a standard for Black actresses or comediennes for several decades. Goldberg herself has portrayed similar characters in a few films. “Years later Marla Gibbs would play the maid, Florence, much in the same vein on the television series ‘The Jeffersons’.”³⁹

Moms’ film experience consisted of *Killer Diller* (1947), *Boarding House Blues* (1948) and a role in *Amazing Grace* (1974). Video documentation for Moms Mabley is unavailable, resulting in a dependence on audio recordings and written observation and analysis of her work. She was quick-witted and often made sexual references in her act. Following Moms were Pearl Bailey, Marla Gibbs, Isabel Sanford, and Shirley Hemphill. The record of accomplishment for Black comediennes is short. All three of these women’s characters and/or stage personas were derivatives of the Mammy. Intent is yet to be determined.

³⁷ Redd Foxx and Norma Miller, The Redd Foxx Encyclopedia of Black Humor (Pasadena: Ward Ritchie Press, 1977) 222.

³⁸ Foxx 160.

However, one needs to consider that the only two types of roles available and successful for Black women were the tragic mulatto or the mammy.

In the 1970's, the role of George Jefferson from the television program "All In the Family" was the basis of the new situation comedy "The Jeffersons." Isabel Sanford and Marla Gibbs began long-running careers in the popular sitcom with Sherman Hemsley (George Jefferson). Isabel Sanford (Louise 'Weezy' Jefferson) had several humorous moments on the show, but she was not the only comedic actress. Marla Gibbs' Mammy-like character, Florence became a very popular. She was self-declared head of household; quick witted, critical of her employers and the deliverer of wisdom and truth. She was also the religious rock of the group. It was common for Florence to enter a scene coming from church or exit on her way to church. She aided in resolving marital problems between George and Weezy and parental problems with their son Lionel. Although Marla Gibbs herself is a handsome woman, Florence was presented as unattractive to the spectator. George Jefferson consistently insulted her appearance. Florence wore the standard maid uniform: blue or black dress and white apron. Eventually, she was costumed in regular dresses, though not flattering to her figure. Her clothing was obviously neutral in cut and style. The presentation of this character was not androgynous, unlike past maids.

Shirley Hemphill started as a stand-up comedienne who portrayed the waitress on the nationally known television sitcom *That's My Mama*.

³⁹ Foxx 160.

Physiognomically, Hemphill fit the mammy role. She was a robust woman devoid of make-up. Her character was stripped of femininity, and much like the mammy, she would often threaten men with a beating if they did or said something to her dissatisfaction.

Goldberg disclosed that many movie stars influenced her decision to become an actress, but Moms Mabley was one of the most influential. In 1983 Goldberg created *Moms Mabley* a one-woman tribute show. She used material from Moms' original shows and mixed in a little improvisation fueled by audience interaction. One of the first performances of the *Moms Mabley* show was at the Hawkeyes Theater in Berkeley, California. In November the show moved to Eli's Mile Hi Club in Oakland, California. There was approximately a 7-month break in the tour, and she resumed performing *Moms* in mid-1984 in San Francisco.

Goldberg started as an actress with strength in improvisation. By chance, an opportunity arose to do a two-person show in Berkeley, California in the early 1980's. Her partner canceled at the last minute, which left Goldberg to perform alone.

In 1985 HBO aired a special titled *Whoopi Goldberg: Direct from Broadway* (1985). The special was produced by Goldberg's own company, Whoop Inc., and aired July 20, 1985.⁴⁰ The video begins with her walking down a hallway with several doors along the right side. She knocks on each door and

⁴⁰ Parish, Whoopi Goldberg 113.

opens the door to see a second image of herself standing in the middle of the dressing room with her back to the door. Each time she turns to face the camera, she is a different character. We are introduced to Fontaine the educated junkie, the surfer girl, the little Black girl, the Jamaican woman and the crippled woman. Her show opens with Fontaine, the junkie with a Ph.D. in literature. Throughout the Fontaine monologue, she interacts with the audience, never breaking character. One unique quality that she maintains through the entire show is dropping in a thought-provoking story or statement from each character. For example, Fontaine recalls an incident at an airport, which detours into a brief story about anti-abortion picketers. "Just as I was going out the door I run into this big dude carrying this picket sign talkin' bout stop abortion. And I said, 'Motherfucker when's the last time you were pregnant? I have the answer to abortion.' He said, 'What's that?' And I said, 'Shoot your dick.'"⁴¹

Near the end of the first monologue Fontaine says,

I'm into books, you know, I got a Ph.D. in Literature from Columbia. [Audience laughter, Goldberg pauses and looks at them] I know you don't think I was *born* a junkie. I have an education, I got a Ph.D. I can't do shit with, you know, so I stay high so I don't get mad. I'm a Junkie, I'm not stupid. Don't let this [indicates her skin color] make you think that's all there is here, there's a lot of people like me, a lot of people... Betty Ford.⁴²

Goldberg stays in character the entire time, giving the spectator the sense that Fontaine is telling the story. Not only does she give the spectator the

⁴¹ Whoopi Goldberg Video, HBO, 1985.

⁴² Whoopi Goldberg HBO 1985.

perspective of a junkie, but she also encourages participation. She creates an environment that is intimate and personal, evoking an emotional response from the audience. She tells an interesting story with funny incidents, then she pulls out a serious statement or description, and then she turns around with another comedic statement or facial expression.

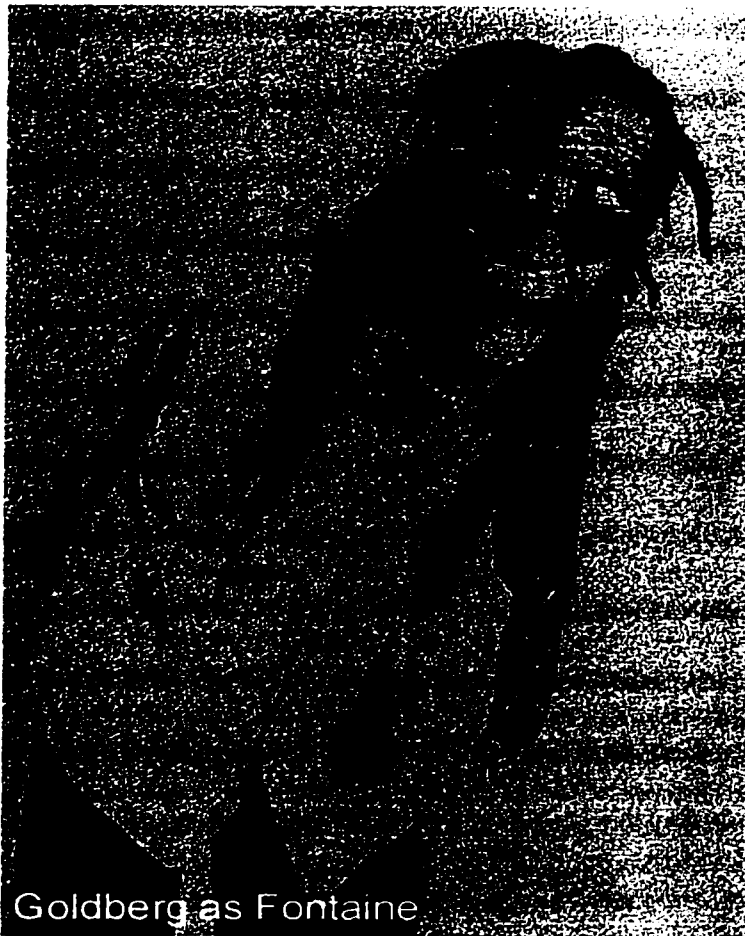


Figure 5 Goldberg as Fontaine

The monologue of the little Black girl that wants to be white affected many people in the audience. The camera focused on the reactions of several people sitting in the first rows of the audience. She begins the monologue with a white long-sleeved button down shirt on her head. In character with a childlike

voice, she explains to the audience that the shirt is her “long luxurious hair.” She continues to tell her story of wanting to be white: “When I get big, I’m going to get on ‘The Love Boat,’ but you have to have long blond hair. I’m going to be blue-eyed and white. I told my mother I didn’t want to be black no more.”⁴³ She asks a Black gentleman in the audience if she can touch his hair. After touching his hair, she realizes that although his hair is like hers, he is not wearing his “shirt” or “long luxurious hair”. She then points to a non-Black woman who has dark curly hair and inquires, “Is that your real hair? That’s not a wig?” This demonstration of innocence affects the audience members. Goldberg’s performance draws the spectator into the emotion of the little girl and her low self-esteem. The camera turns to show the serious look on their faces, the compassion and reaction of concern for this “child.” Within seconds, she has the audience fall from laughter to somber silence.

As entertainment journalist Cathleen McGuigan states, “Whoopi doesn’t do one-liners, or impressions, or self-deprecatory-shtik. Like Pryor, she treads that treacherous territory that falls somewhere between stand-up comedy and legitimate theater.”⁴⁴ It is a combination of comedy and tragedy, a series of monologues. Her show did not fit into any category that allowed producers and critics to classify it. At the end of the show, Goldberg walked on stage to give thanks to the audience and the crew. She then states, “I am what they... I’m part

⁴³ Cathleen McGuigan, “The ‘Whoopi’ Comedy Show,” Newsweek 5 Mar. 1984: 63.

⁴⁴ McGuigan 63.

of what they like to call the avant-garde, though I think they call you the avant-garde when they're not sure what you do.”⁴⁵

Critics and reporters have tried to fit her into a specific category by comparing her to other comedians. A 1984 People Weekly article states that critics have compared Whoopi Goldberg to Richard Pryor and Lily Tomlin. Other reviews have compared her to Richard Pryor along with Eddie Murphy and others. “She is becoming a comedic chameleon of such proportion that comparisons with Richard Pryor are irresistible.”⁴⁶ Early in her career, Goldberg “shrug[ed] off comparisons of her offbeat characters to the work of Richard Pryor. ‘One style of what I do has comedic elements along the lines of Richard Pryor’s. But Richard does his thing as himself, and I do nothing as myself.’”⁴⁷ The “The ‘Whoopi’ comedy Show” article did not provide analysis to prove this comparison. After researching Pryor and Tomlin’s styles individually, one can see a reasonable foundation to this comparison. Richard Pryor is renowned for his ghetto/street language and knowledge. He had a unique timing and physical ability to demonstrate emotions and attitudes. Goldberg has this quality. Lily Tomlin, on the other hand, has a catalogue of characters and personalities unlike any other well-known American comedian, male or female. It is understandable that Goldberg would be compared to the two comedians, considering that in the early stages of her comedic career she

⁴⁵ Whoopi Goldberg HBO.

⁴⁶ McGuigan 63.

(Careened) through a chameleon array of comic guises, with only a spare skirt, scarf and shades to help her. Whoopi, 34, introduces herself as Fontaine, a tough-talking street junkie with a Ph.D. in literature. A turn of the head, and she becomes a dippy, air-head Valley “surfer chick.” Minutes later, draping a skirt over her head, she turns into a ghetto urchin who dreams of turning white.⁴⁸

Comedienne and Actress, Tracey Ulman is celebrated for her distinct and colorful characters, especially Tracy the Psychiatrist on the prime time show *Ally McBeal*, but Tomlin came before Goldberg and Ulman. Unfortunately, there is minimal research and text available on the subject of female comediennes, especially Black female comediennes. Therefore, it is probable that the results of this research are not conclusive. However, Goldberg has a combination of the street language and knowledge similar to Pryor as well as the creativity and imagination to create multiple characters and personalities like Tomlin. Goldberg’s characters range in social class, gender, education, race, beliefs, and physical challenges.

This is not to ignore comparisons of Goldberg to other comedians, but the Pryor/Tomlin combination was different. Like Goldberg, Lily Tomlin started working in theatre. In the 1960’s Tomlin moved to Detroit and worked at The Unstabled theatre for several years. After hours, she would join her fellow thespians for improvisational sessions. It was during this time that she created and developed a handful of characters. What was unique about Tomlin was that,

⁴⁷ Pamela Noel, “Who Is Whoopi Goldberg And What Is She Doing On Broadway???” *Ebony* March 1985: 34.

⁴⁸“Whoopi Goldberg,” *People Weekly* 72.

similar to Goldberg, “she had a talent no one knew what to do with.”⁴⁹ In 1964 she moved back to New York. Similarly, Goldberg began in theatre and, like Tomlin, wanted to be an actress. They both had an uncanny way of developing characters early in their careers that made them stand out from others in their field. Additionally, they also did not rely on the classic joke with a punch line. Instead, they told humorous stories in character. They took on the costume, posture, vocal qualities and facial expressions of their creations. Secondly, they both had a full range of characters that crossed age, race, gender and social class, appealing to several groups at once. One difference that separates Tomlin and Goldberg is race. Goldberg still had to withstand racial discrimination. Moreover, because of her specific appearance, she was not aesthetically as versatile as Tomlin.



Figure 6 Lily Tomlin, 1986

⁴⁹ Jeff Sorensen, Lily Tomlin: Woman of a Thousand Faces (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

Goldberg's ability to stay in character sometimes distracted from her dreadlocks, loose clothing and boots. She did not use make-up or other theatrics to create a character. The only props she used were a bandana, sunglasses, and the white button down shirt. Conversely, Tomlin would use full make-up and would change her hairstyle and costume to aid in creating her characters. Her character Ernestine, the sadistic 1940's telephone operator, donned a wig, make-up, jewelry, and era-styled dress. Goldberg's surfer chick character constantly plays with her hair during the monologue. Goldberg would run her hands over her own dreadlocks as if they were long straight tresses. She used action to provide the imagery of the surfer chick.

In the 1950's, Pearl Bailey graced comedy stages with her unique comedic style.

Yet influenced as she was by the old-timers, Pearl never pushed her humor to the point where it might disturb an audience. Sometimes Moms or Redd and later Richard Pryor seemed bent on driving audiences up a wall with their incisive barbs. Bailey, however, was always a soothing figure. She used humor to communicate her view of the world as a joyous, harmonious place that had no great problems or tensions.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Donald Bogle, Brown Sugar (New York: Harmony Books, 1980) 124.



Figure 7 From center to right Redd Foxx, Ossie Davis and Moms Mabley

Contrary to Moms' style, Pearl Bailey "played more with the idea of romance than sex, and stayed clear of racial material that was then taboo."⁵¹ Bailey presented a different type of comedian with her charming and flirtatious delivery. She would wear nice dresses with her hair deliberately styled and face complete with make up. Goldberg, however, ignored the common rules of femininity with her vulgar language and sexual innuendoes. Her presentation was also more hippie-like with the loose shirt and pants and, most notably, her hair. Today, it is common for comedians, male and female, to incorporate sex and race in their act. Goldberg's act clearly contained sexual and racial issues. The Surfer Chick and the Jamaican Woman monologues both contain strong and complex sexual attitudes and opinions. The Surfer Chick tells a story of how she "did it" with a boy that she met at a party and is now pregnant. The monologue pursues additional issues, such as religion, abortion, and family dysfunction. The

Jamaican Woman discusses her sexual relationship with the white man she lives with. She speaks freely of the difference between their cultures, his body, and his sexual desires.



Figure 8 Goldblum as Terry Doolittle in *Jumpin' Jack Flash*

Goldblum's stand up style carried over into film. Although she proved herself a skilled dramatic actress in her 1985 film debut, *The Color Purple*, several of her early films were comedies. *Jumpin' Jack Flash* received a great deal of attention from critics. *Burglar* with Bobcat Goldthwait followed in 1987, and the unsuccessful *The Telephone* was filmed in 1988.

Goldblum was cast as data entry clerk Terry Doolittle in *Jumpin' Jack Flash*. Terry Doolittle stumbles across an undercover agent who is trapped behind the Iron Curtain and needs help to escape. This is a basic spy movie (though we

⁵¹ Bogle, *Brown Sugar* 124.

do not see the spy until the very end), combined with comedy via the Doolittle character. Goldberg's most dramatic moments are during her solitary scenes. She visits Jack's (the spy) apartment looking for clues to help him escape. In this scene, Goldberg takes her time and allows the scene to develop. The camera follows her as she examines her surroundings. The shtick and exaggerated facial expressions are absent. The scenes of her in the office after hours communicating with Jack also allow Goldberg to display her talents as an actress. Thought and intention are present in her actions. Slapstick scenes counterbalance these serious scenes with lethal agents chasing Doolittle. The most caricature exposing moment happens when a tow-truck drags Doolittle, trapped in a telephone booth, through city traffic. She screams and yells for help, but her pleas are pointless. Drivers and pedestrians look horrified and confused at the towed telephone booth containing Doolittle with arms and feet flailing about. Eventually the telephone booth comes to a stop, and she nearly escapes. Although she is drugged with truth serum, she escapes and finds her way to a day spa. The effects of the serum cause Doolittle to appear drunk. She cannot walk a straight line, and her speech is drastically slurred. She frightens the employees and clients of the spa, causing a restrained chaos among the stiff-lipped group. Obviously, the scene was intended to be humorous, but it was so over the top that it did not fit with the rest of the film. It seemed that Goldberg's comedic skills were exploited, twisted into an exaggerated representation of her work.

The Telephone was practically a one-woman show about Vashti Blue (Whoopi Goldberg), a woman who uses the telephone to stay connected with the outside world. The telephone is a device; Goldberg transforms into multiple characters by holding imaginary conversations via the telephone. At one moment, it seems that Vashti is rehearsing her characters for an upcoming audition. However, it becomes clear that she is not successfully dealing with reality when her acting agent, played by Elliot Gould, visits. The performance contained many of the aspects of Goldberg's one-woman stage show. Fontainisms, or codes, are evident during the pseudo-conversation with the telephone company. She also uses different accents such as the Jamaican accent from the same show as Fontaine. However, it seemed strained and did not flow with the same ease evident in her previous performances. The narrative is very depressing, and the anger and irrational behavior make the spectator uncomfortable. The film lacks humor and the usually ironic perspective of life's difficulties.

Goldberg did not create a stand up "act"; she created a performance that consisted of a series of monologues. She performed all of the monologues in character. Each monologue demonstrated an important life-changing moment in that character's life: a moment of realization that Fontaine experienced after reading a sentence by Anne Frank and the Jamaican woman when she realized that her companion "the Raisin" was a compassionate man. Although the monologues initially evoked laughter, they were, under the surface, about the seriousness of the human condition. Each character's story had a thought-

provoking message. It is understandable that these characters would fit perfectly in the collaborative *Comic Relief*. *Comic Relief* was a special show created by Robin Williams, Billy Crystal and Whoopi Goldberg to raise money and awareness for the homeless. Goldberg has the ability to use humor to pull in the audience far enough into the character's world. Once she has them laughing in the palm of her hand, she slides in a serious emotion or statement. Rather than laughing at the twists and turns of life, the audience laughs sometimes out of discomfort.

This analysis has established that Goldberg is not a stand-up comedienne but an actress, as she has always maintained. The media has incorrectly categorized her as a stand-up comedian. Close observation of her solo performances proves that she intertwines comedy and tragedy. The characters she presents are in essence storytellers. Their stories are comprised of unfortunate circumstances, misunderstandings and humanity. Goldberg's characters each deliver a message.

CHAPTER 3

EXAMINATION OF GOLDBERG'S FILMIC SEXUALITY

Nowhere has the removal of the Goldberg character from any meaningful context been more problematic than in the romantic arena. The same thing happened with Eddie Murphy in *Beverly Hills Cop*: you take the Black star out of the Black community to make him more palatable, but then who does he date? Studio fears that America couldn't cope with Whoopi in the arms of a white lover were borne out by *Fatal Beauty*, where love scenes between Goldberg and co-star Sam Elliot ended up on the cutting-room floor after objections from preview audiences.⁵²

This chapter examines and identifies an area of work within film studies, namely Black female stars. Although actors form the basis of probably the larger part of everyday discussion of film, and although the majority of film texts produced are analyses of one genre or another, very little in the way of up-to-date academic work has been done in the area of Black actresses. There is a lack of contemporary analysis of Black actresses in general, and specifically Black actresses in love scenes. There is a noticeable lack of close-ups and love scenes of the African-American female, especially Whoopi Goldberg. Though many factors come into play, it is understandable that there is a reason for this. There are two existing arguments. The first is the dissatisfaction of roles and profilmic qualities of the African American actress. The second is the technical academic analysis.

⁵² Ron Grant, "Making Whoopi," Sight & Sound February 1993: 13

Donald Bogle articulates expertise of the presentation of Black actresses and uses his theories to communicate a speculative examination of it. Unfortunately, he is the only authority in this area of study. James Robert Parish has written several books relating to Blacks in Hollywood, but his work is biographical rather than theoretical. Both authors offer a starting point and a firm foundation for this research.

This chapter is structured in two parts. In both we examine both the actors star signification and non-movie star signification. The actresses are examined as members of a specific genre: Black women as film actresses and as characters based on ideological representations of society and/or filmmakers. The reality of the women's aesthetic and racial qualities must be acknowledged as their significance as Black women does have an influence on how they are filmed. The two parts of the chapter each focus on specific questions. The first part (Determining Factors) examines the factors that establish sexual representation of the Black female. The second part (Love Scenes) poses the question: what are the profilmic values of Whoopi Goldberg in love scenes? Of course, the qualifications of a love scene need to be established. For the purposes of close examination, only mainstream films are used in addition to a controlled selection of stars. Both of these sections involve ideology as defined by Richard Dyer in his text Stars: "Ideology is the set of ideas and representations in which people collectively make sense of the world and the society in which they live."⁵³ It is not assumed

⁵³ Richard Dyer, Stars (Great Britain, BFI Publishing: 1992) 2.

that ideology encompasses all human thought, theory and ideas. Ideology in his essay is the general world of thought by society as a whole. The primary consideration in this thesis is of the dominant ideology of American society.

Love scenes are a common occurrence in 1990's mainstream film. The term "love scene" is specifically defined for this particular research. Although sexual interaction consists of, but is not limited to, affectionately touching, kissing or hugging clothed or unclothed, "love scene" in this case refers to nude (or implicitly nude) sexual interaction between lovers. Love scenes also vary in intensity. For instance, they can be soft and romantic with a couple kissing by the fire. Alternatively, they can be extremely physical and exaggerated, such as the love scene between Tom Cruise and Kelly Preston in *Jerry McGuire* (1996). For the purpose of this research, a love scene is defined as a display of intimate sexual contact between a male and a female that leads to sex.

Many movies proudly display actors and actresses kissing, hugging and simulating (so it appears) intercourse in their attempts to show loving relationships between the characters with whom we desire, admire and/or identify. How often have we viewed a biracial couple in a love scene, particularly a Black female and a White male? It is rare. In April 2000 Aaliyah (Black female) and Jet Li (Asian male) were paired in the film *Romeo Must Die* as partners trying to defeat the evils of their respective crime families. Although there is an obviously mutual attraction presented to the spectator, the couple never kisses. The film ends with them hugging and walking away from the tragic final scene holding

hands. In examining the way the camera looks at Black female stars, one can realize the inconsiderable amount of Black female stars in love scenes. When Black actress Lela Rochon “landed the role opposite Chris O’Donnell (White male) in *The Chamber* (1996), the part was substantially reworked: the love interest was written out.”⁵⁴ However, Rochon has a love scene in the Eddie Murphy directed *Harlem Nights* (1989). She portrayed Sunshine the hooker who seduces an Italian policeman as part of a scheme to steal money. The policeman, although married, falls in love with her and proposes. It is important to note that this was written, produced and directed by Black filmmakers. Additionally, Rochon was cast in *Mr. & Mrs. Loving* (1996) a made-for-TV movie about a mixed couple living during the civil rights movement. The narrative centered on her and Timothy Hutton (White male) portraying a biracial couple that could not legally marry due to their ethnicity. This chapter focuses on the films mentioned above, not because they are specific to the civil rights movement or historical stories regarding true incidents, but because they are fictional narratives.

There is a difference between the sexuality of the Black female star and the Black female character. The star’s natural physiognomy determines how the character’s physical sexuality is presented. We will examine the star first and the character second. The star’s physical attributes are one of two factors in determining the character’s visual and implied qualities. The second factor is the profilmic qualities established by the producers. The star’s physiognomy and

⁵⁴ Samuels.

status determine the profilmic qualities of the character as established by the producers. Challenging Stuart's earlier statement, I pose the question: how does film present the sexuality of Whoopi Goldberg? The answer to this question lies in analyzing films presenting her in love scenes as well as films that contain love scenes with other African-American female stars. Additionally, finding previous discourse in regards to love scenes presenting Black female stars was extremely difficult. Films were selected to observe and analyze these points for the purpose of research. The films discussed were selected based on mainstream status, the actresses, and general representation of the Black female in a romantic relationship.

Goldberg faced challenges in Hollywood in regards to her "type" and the question of race identification. Specific problems faced by her in the areas of race and physiognomy as they relate to gaining roles with love scenes are examined. In examining Whoopi Goldberg as a star, it is obvious that she can "pull" an audience to the box office from her previous film success. She is a star. Examining her physiognomy, it is clear that she is not slender; she is dark complexioned, has her hair styled in dreadlocks, and does not have any eyebrows. She is not a representation of the ideological Hollywood female star. She has stated many times, "'Western beautiful,' I don't quite fit it. But sexy is a state of mind. I wish that we could make them understand that a little faster."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Jill Kearney 27.

According to Givens, “Goldberg recalled ‘her beginning in the business, acknowledged that she didn’t have to struggle to get in.’ She admitted, ‘It was sort of handed to me on a silver platter. The struggles one has to conquer come after one gets in the business.’”⁵⁶ She performed in a variety of roles traditionally reserved for Whites and/or physically attractive actors, yet she does not represent the ideal “Barbie doll starlet.” Ironically, she still argues with producers to grant her a love scene.

There are two important factors in exploring Goldberg’s strategies for obtaining a role in a love scene. There are a minimal number of romantic roles available to Black females in film, restricting availability of roles to audition. Secondly, Goldberg has a unique look and talent that seems to appeal to a variety of audiences but does not fit the classic love interest physiognomy. Discussing the roles available and offered to Black actresses, Goldberg states:

But I also did some of those movies because I was trying to show that Black actors can go after any role; it doesn’t have to be specifically Black. Hollywood hasn’t begun to understand that Black people can play roles other than the ones where it says for a Black actor. I want them saying they’ve got a role here is a role for a great actor; call up Whoopi Goldberg.⁵⁷

While Goldberg’s outlook seems to prove successful, what about the roles she wants but is not offered because of her presumed lack of ideological sex appeal? Givens refers to Goldberg in an article, disclosing that “there have been instances when she’s endured painful backlashes because of her desire to be a

⁵⁶ Armstrong 21.

nonconformist. Such as the time when the White studio executive touched her dreadlocked hair and said, ‘What are we going to do with this?’”⁵⁸ Goldberg has maintained her physical individuality, which she admits has been challenged constantly during her career. She speaks candidly about her appearance and descriptions of her as “an unlikely star. Too everything to make it to the Big Time: Too dark, of course, hair too nappy; looks too unconventional, according to the naysayers, the dream crushers. She’s had to deal with the you-don’t-look-like-a-leading-lady syndrome in a system that’s designed to recognize people who are her opposites.”⁵⁹ She admits, “It’s hard when you don’t fit the traditional view of beauty. I’ve gotten letters from people that say if I’d just get my nose done or if I wasn’t so dark, I’d be OK-looking.”⁶⁰ There is no doubt that her physical appearance does not fit the mold of the “Barbie doll starlet” and that she has been denied roles as the seductress or lover because of her hair, physique, Negroid features, skin color and other characteristics.

Is it her appearance that causes executives to react with apprehension and opposition? She still maintains that there is nothing wrong with her appearance. She believes the industry and spectators are wrong and she is right. The candid Goldberg tells journalist Teresa Wiltz:

Folks will dog you if they think you’re ugly, There’s nothing wrong with this face, with its pockmarks, lines and no eyebrows. In our country, to be

⁵⁷ Parish, *Whoopi Goldberg* 340.

⁵⁸ “Whoopi Goldberg Cites the Painful Costs She Pays for Being an Individual,” *Jet* 64.

⁵⁹ Campbell 58.

⁶⁰ Samuels 74.

yourself as an individual is a dangerous thing. You're supposed to go with the crowd. But it wasn't as though I went home Black and came out as something else. I've always been proud to be who I am.⁶¹

For the purpose of clear and thorough discussion, three films, *Made in America*, *The Rich Man's Wife* (1995), and *Corrina, Corrina*, were studied. "But even when Goldberg has allowed half-hearted romantic brushes with white male co-stars, as in *Sister Act* (1992), her outlandish appearance effectively de-sexes her, and a taboo activity like interracial love loses its charge."⁶² This is also true for *Made in America*. The one love scene in this film that could exhibit compassion and love is redirected into a circus act.

Goldberg has broken through barriers that have been impenetrable for other Black actresses. Additionally, she has managed to achieve financial success, critical acclaim as a performer, and has placed herself amongst the ranks of powerful producers and film executives. As Journalist Bebe Moore Campbell states, "But Whoopi has arguably come much closer to that kind of A-list primacy than any other African-American film star in history. If she hasn't climbed to the very top of the Hollywood mountain yet, she certainly has the guts to get there."⁶³ Yet, she still struggles to accomplish one goal that is important to her. Goldberg wishes to act in a serious love scene with an actor of another race. She believes that an actress' talent should earn her a role, not her race or attractiveness.

⁶¹ "Whoopi Goldberg Cites The Painful Costs She Pays For Being An Individual"⁶⁴.

⁶² Stuart 13.

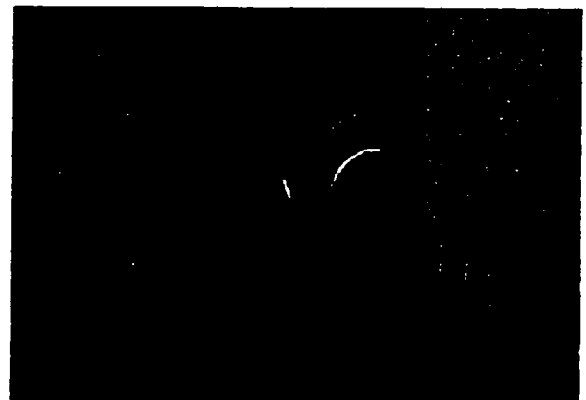
⁶³ Campbell 58.

The following year she starred in *Corrina, Corrina*, a film about an interracial romance that takes place in the 1950's. The narrative consists of Corrina (Goldberg) working as a nanny/maid for Manny Singer (Ray Liotta) and his daughter after his wife dies. Throughout the film, Corrina and Manny share personal stories and a mutual fondness develops. Eventually, they fall into a comfortable marital-like relationship. She takes care of the home and child, and he brings her flowers. They never discuss their courtship with each other, but it is obviously implied and condoned. As the story progresses, the relationship between Manny and Corrina transforms from professional to one with characteristics of a marital relationship. Manny, his daughter and Corrina engage in casual conversation during a barbecued dinner in the back yard

Corrina: "Molly, don't play with your food."

Manny: "Listen to your mother."

Corrina and Manny do not realize the slip, but Molly does and smiles with content. It is her dream that she, her father and Corrina become a family.



Figures 9a & 9b Goldberg and Liotta on the couch in *Corrina, Corrina*

In another scene, Corrina and Manny enjoy the night air in the backyard while they sit on a couch. Manny looks affectionately at Corrina and says, “You have such a pretty smile.” He extends his hand and asks her to dance. They dance slowly with their faces pressed together, both smiling contently. The film does allow the spectator to share in their backyard conversation, which leads to a dance under the stars. As they dance, they stop and look into each other’s eyes and share their first kiss. It is a romantic kiss as he caresses the nape of her neck. That is as far as that scene takes us at that moment and through the rest of the film. This is just one example of the limitations of love scenes between Goldberg and white males.

In Jon Boorstin's The Hollywood Eye, he discusses how Hollywood and film present actors as stars. In his chapter titled “The Vicarious Eye,” he discusses the effects of camera shots as well as love scenes in the section “Emotional Space.” “If the shot works, the empathic rhythms are so sure in the writing, the performance, and the staging that the viewer is wafted along effortlessly from moment to moment.”⁶⁴ Unfortunately, the scripts rarely call for a Black female lead and a Black female with a love interest. If a Black actress is cast the performance is affected because restrictions are placed on her character. Lastly, the director, directed by the studio as to “what the audience is ready for,” controls the staging. In regards to love scenes, Boorstin states:

⁶⁴ Jon Boorstin, The Hollywood Eye, (Cornelia & Michael Bessie Bks/HarperCollins: New York, 1990) 95.

But in most love scenes, for instance, we don't want to see the scene only from one character's point of view, and we don't want a Cary Grant or an Ingrid Berman to be just a dark lump in the foreground. So, important as singles are, editors have another saying. 'The best shot of all is a two-shot that works.' If the scene doesn't need to be fiddled with, if the director caught both actors in peak performance on the same take, at a rhythm that feels true but not self-indulgent, there is nothing better.⁶⁵

Boorstin believes that "Good directors calibrate their shots, building a visual structure to parallel the emotional structure of the story. If a moment is important, closing in can heighten it, but a director can't make a moment important by closing in. If the audience doesn't want to move in closer, to feel the moment magnified, it will feel manipulated by the director's trick." In *Made in America*, there were seven close ups of Goldberg. A large part of the single love scene between Goldberg and Ted Danson was done as a long shot. The audience did not get a chance to get closer. The long shot distances the couple from the spectator. Additionally, the background filled the majority of space in the long shot. The furniture, decorations, pet bird, etc. cluttered the scene making it less intimate.

⁶⁵ Boorstin 95.

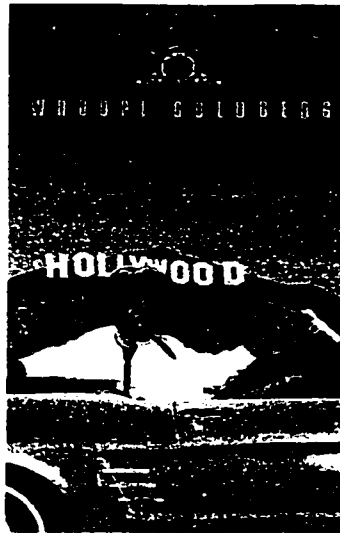


Figure 10 Fatal Beauty video cover

Similarly, in *Fatal Beauty* (1987), the love scene between Marshak (Sam Elliott) and Rizzoli (Goldberg) is absent. Instead, the spectator is given a morning after shot of the exterior of her home. The profilmic codes insinuate sexual interaction between the characters. In a scene preceding a disturbing telephone call, Rizzoli tells Marshak why she so passionately fights to keep drug dealers off the streets. After telling her sorrowful secret of losing her child to drugs, he gives her a comforting hug. Most importantly, he says, “It’s okay, baby.” The spectator feels empathy for Rizzoli and admiration for Marshak's understanding. In the following scene, the profilmic values insinuate the characters had engaged in sex. The shot fades from the embrace to show her pink mustang parked in front of her home. The scene is highlighted with sunlight and chirping birds. Filmically, a telephone rings. The shot changes to show Goldberg’s silhouette in the shower. Goldberg calls out his last name from the shower in a happy melodic

tone. She emerges from the shower with a towel wrapped around her hair and a flattering black and white Japanese robe. She calls out for him again, using his first name as she walks to the bedroom. The camera reveals the empty unmade bed. The covers are pulled back on both sides, and both pillows have been used. The tone in Goldberg's voice suggests a familiarity on the level of male and female attraction and interaction. Marshak has left the building. Not alone in his account of the cut, Guerrero claims, "The situation got to the point where she [Whoopi Goldberg] openly protested MGM's racism for cutting a love scene between her and white Sam Elliot in her detective vehicle, *Fatal Beauty* (1987)."⁶⁶ The end of the film confirms the love relationship between the characters. As Marshak is being loaded into an ambulance, she walks over to him and places her hand on the gurney:

Rizzoli: "How you doin'?"

Marshak: "Good. Guess I'll be goin' away for a while, huh?"

Rizzoli: "Yeah. The good news is I'll be waiting' for you when you get out. Hang in there babe, everything's going to be fine." He closes his eyes and smiles. She reaches down, and they kiss for 7 seconds.

Rizzoli: "You're gonna be fine."⁶⁷

The film ends, leaving vagueness to their relationship just as in the recent film *Romeo Must Die*.

⁶⁶ Ed Guerrero, *Framing Blackness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993) 194.

⁶⁷ *Fatal Beauty* (1985).

Although not presented profilmically, four important elements in *Fatal Beauty* lead the audience to conclude that there is a sexual relationship between the characters: first, Marshak decides to protect Rizzoli by following her and saving her in several dangerous situations. Second, he buys her an expensive dress, worth “\$5,000.” Third, they kiss for a solid seven seconds. Lastly, she uses a term of endearment, calling him “babe” at the end of the film, followed by a quick “I love you kiss.” Against Goldberg’s wishes, “love scenes between Goldberg and Sam Elliot[t] ended up on the cutting-room floor after objections from preview audiences.”⁶⁸

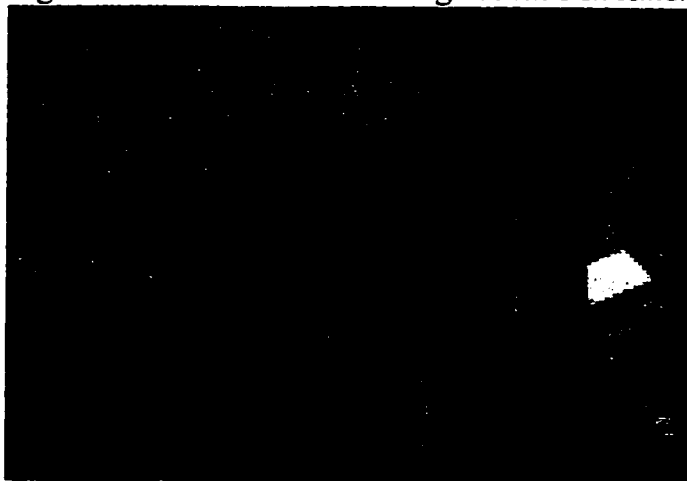
According to Boorstin, it is important to build along with the emotion of the scene by paralleling the shot with the action and emotion. If not, the spectator becomes detached from the emotion of the characters. One scene in *Vampire in Brooklyn* (1995), for instance, starring Angela Bassett and Allen Payne (both are Black actors), presents the couple in an embrace, and the camera pulls in close to their faces via angle/reverse angle. As they become physically closer and the sexual tension increases, the camera close up increases. It parallels the emotion of the scene. However, if we look at the love scene in *Made in America* between Whoopi Goldberg and Ted Danson, the camera does not parallel the emotion of the scene, unless the director is trying to make the audience feel as awkward as the characters’ relationship appears. The narrative is about Goldberg’s daughter, played by Nia Long, who tries to find her biological father through the records of

⁶⁸ Stuart 13.

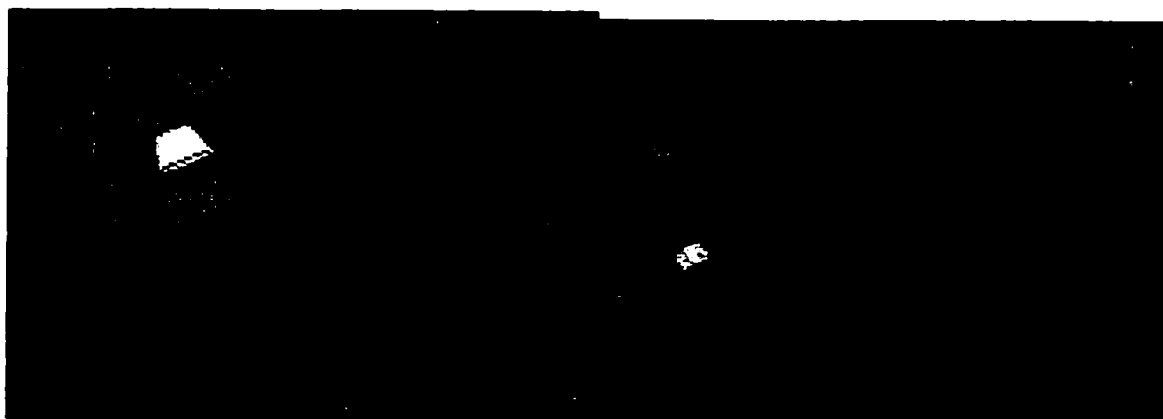
a sperm bank. Her search discloses Ted Danson as her father. During the course of trying to get to know him, Goldberg develops a relationship with him that demonstrates a mutual attraction. The “love scene” between Danson and Goldberg takes place after an impromptu date. Through examination of each shot in this scene, it is obvious that we are to believe the characters have a mutual sexual attraction and are anxious to act on their feelings, yet the scene is presented comically.

The scene begins with Danson and Goldberg kissing passionately at her door as soft romantic music fills the background. Danson smoothly opens the door during the embrace, and they enter the house. As soon as the camera switches from outside the house to inside, the music changes to a fast rumba. The clatter of a lamp falling and bumped furniture disrupts the quiet romantic evening. Goldberg’s pet parrot hangs upside down, squawking in the background. After dashingy tossing his hat aside, Danson begins to guide her toward the bedroom with confidence and purpose. First, he lifts her as she straddles his waist with her back against the wall. Her back bumps a picture, and her foot knocks over a bowl of fruit as it searches for a resting-place on the buffet. During this scene, Goldberg’s hands and feet are flailing out of control. Eventually, she settles down, and he dips her from side to side, their lips never parting. When they finally make it to the bed, fully clothed, Danson on top, they struggle with her sweater, not quite able to remove it. They are interrupted by the daughter’s return home after a date, and the scene ends.

Figure 11 Danson and Goldberg in *Made In America* (images 1-5)

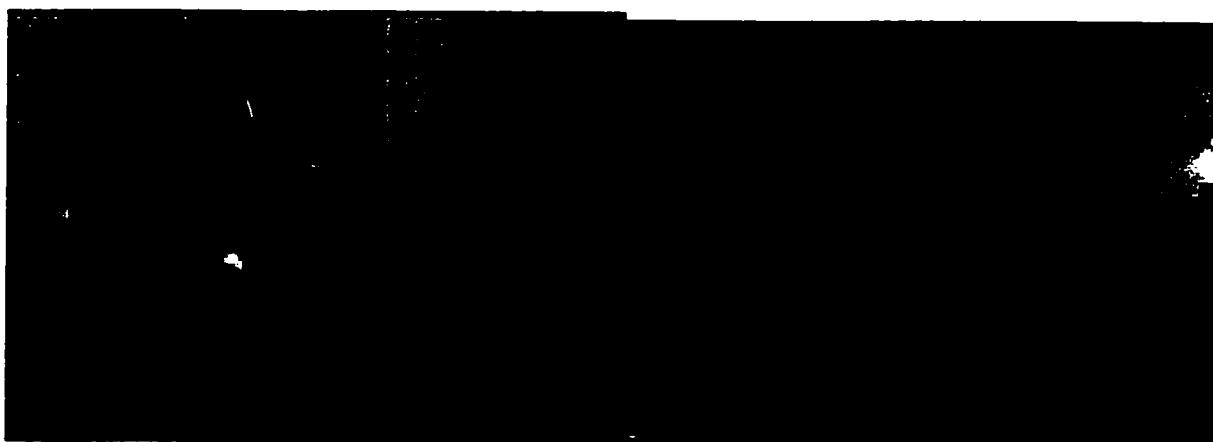


Inside her house, he tosses his hat



Awkwardly lies her on the arm of the couch.

Knocking into pictures and furniture.



Dipping her in time to the music

On the bed trying to remove her sweater.

The scene between Danson and Goldberg presents a comically awkward, almost adolescent moment, distancing the audience from the couple. The profilmic manipulation diverts the audience's attention away from the desire to see the couple in an intimate, loving encounter. This is an important point because it is Goldberg's first love scene. Although known as a comedienne, Goldberg desires to be known and referred to as an actress. This scene was important to her career due to "the times when directors erased love scenes from her movies because, as they phrased it, 'she wasn't 'sexy'"⁶⁹

Goldberg does not possess the standard starlet features, such as silky, flowing tresses, a thin body, and refined facial features, present in actresses like Kelly Preston. Analyzing the common physiognomic qualities of the Hollywood starlet leads to the belief that Goldberg has not had a sexual love scene because she does not possess these starlet qualities. The audience wants to identify with characters in film. They want to relate to them. Hollywood believes the spectator is not ready to identify with Whoopi Goldberg and a White lover on screen. Perhaps Hollywood believes that once the characters shed their costumes, the audience will become detached. Yet, there is Halle Berry who possesses the physiognomic qualities but also has yet to be in an interracial sexual love scene. The similarities between the two stars suggest that they may not have been cast in such scenes because of their race. This discussion is important to the growth of

⁶⁹ Jet (20 Oct. 1997): 64.

the film industry and its attempts to reflect American culture. Biracial couples exist in America, but they rarely exist in film.

The topic of biracial love scenes has solicited comments from several critics and journalists. Regarding *Sister Act*, *Entertainment Weekly* reports, “The loudest hollers coming from Burbank that summer concerned the casting of her love interest. In early drafts of the script, Goldberg’s character fell in love with Eddie, the cop who hides her from the mob. Touchstone [Pictures] already had cast a White actor (Harvey Keitel) as the Mafioso boyfriend and wanted to make Eddie Black. One wanted a White boyfriend.”⁷⁰ Supported by Parish, “[Goldberg] also got fed up with dinner-theater owners telling her, ‘We can’t put you and a white guy together, because the folks from Texas can’t handle it.’ Moreover, ‘You are good, but our economy rides on people coming to see what they expect. And they’re not expecting you.’”⁷¹ This was during the beginning of Goldberg’s career long before she starred in *The Color Purple*. Yet years later, she still faces the same obstacle.

Likewise, *The Rich Man’s Wife* pairs Halle Berry, cast as the wife, with Christopher McDonald as the (White) rich man. The intimate love scenes are non-existent. There is anger, disgust and longing but no loving connection shown through sex. Berry’s character does have a lover, but the spectator is not included in the physical relationship suggested by their interaction as a couple. In one

⁷⁰ Jess Cagle, “Whoopi Goldberg’s Duel with the Higher Powers at Disney Tested Everybody’s Faith in ‘Sister Act’,” *Entertainment Weekly*: 2.

⁷¹ Parish 56.

scene, she knocks on an apartment door. A White man answers. They exchange greetings, and he lets her in. As she enters, they embrace and kiss passionately. He closes the door as they kiss. Just after the door closes, the scene cuts to inside the apartment, and now they are talking. They sit closely on the neatly made bed, and eventually, she rises and crosses to the other side of the room. It is very clear that they are lovers by their dialogue and affection. In *The Rich Man's Wife* three men, her husband, lover and the psychopath that stalks her, want Berry. In reality, these characters would have made love to Berry's character, but that is never shared in scenes. In fact, even relations between her and her husband are not shown. Nothing goes beyond a kiss or wanting touch. Berry is always clothed, as are the men. Physically articulating the sexual relationship between Berry and any of these men would not compromise the film's integrity. This may appear voyeuristic, but it is an important issue considering that film is an escape for some, entertainment for others. It also allows us to see into the lives of others and gain knowledge and understanding about the human condition. It allows a representation of society. Biracial relationships exist. Avoiding them in film excludes not only those who are living that truth but those who do not understand it. According to Boorstin, "The real trick is to be following the audience and leading it at the same time."⁷² Where is Hollywood trying to lead the audience?

⁷² Boorstin 93.

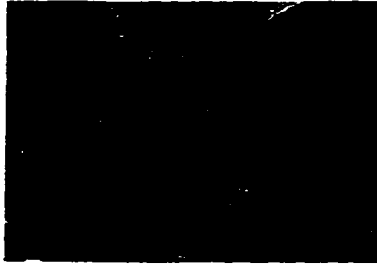


Figure 12 Halle Berry in *The Rich Man's Wife*

In his book White, Richard Dyer's analysis of the psychological motives of sexuality states that the underlying purpose of sex is reproduction:

Inter-racial heterosexuality threatens the power of whiteness because it breaks the legitimization of whiteness with reference to the white body. For all the appeal to spirit, still, if white bodies are no longer indubitably white bodies, if they can no longer guarantee their own reproductions as white, then the "natural" basis of their dominion is no longer credible.⁷³

This is not to say that society engages in sex only for the purpose of reproduction. It is to say that society is always aware that the result of sex can be reproduction. The more sexual occurrences, the more likely the consequence of reproduction. It can be argued that inter-racial intercourse poses a threat to the continuation of the races involved. To assume that this reason motivates the producers decisions would be short sighted. However, the previous point is supported by the knowledge that Black actresses have encountered continuous negative comments and rejection regarding playing a character whose love interest is white.

According to Les Payne's reaction to People's 1996 cover story, "Up Front: What's Wrong With This Picture? Exclusion Of Minorities Has Become A Way Of Life In Hollywood," "People magazine must have shocked itself upon

discovering what has been painfully obvious to Black actors and moviegoers for generations.”⁷⁴ The article was a collaborative effort of seven journalists researching the presence of employed minorities in the entertainment industry. “Our investigation focused on Blacks, both because they are America’s largest minority and because of the widespread belief that they have successfully broken through Hollywood’s barriers.”⁷⁵

The lack of previous discourse on the subject leads to the possibility that the study or research would lead to exposure of the root of the problem, which in turn would have to be accepted as truth. If the root of the problem is exposed and not corrected, it will continue, eventually be removed, or die. Once the problem is exposed, it must be dealt with; otherwise, society is condoning it.

Payne’s comment of the “‘exhaustive four-month investigation’ of Hollywood racism lacks, as one editor notes, ‘hard data on minority employment,’ which weakens the account. There are, however, Black celebrity quotes and anecdotes aplenty”⁷⁶ is not entirely correct. The article does quote employment statistics from 1994 and 1996. Unfortunately, current statistics are almost inaccessible. The authors of the article did provide anecdotes and celebrity quotes to support their findings. However, Mr. Payne’s opposition is understandable. Unfortunately, criticism is not going to cure the root of an ailment.

⁷³ Richard Dyer, White, (New York: Routledge, 1997) 25.

⁷⁴ Les Payne, “An ‘R’ Rating Means Racism,” Newsday (24 Mar. 1996): 100.

⁷⁵ “Up Front: What’s Wrong With This Picture? Exclusion Of Minorities Has Become A Way Of Life In Hollywood,” 42.

Again, due to the lack of concern on this subject, discourse is lacking. Academic discourse seems to have avoided addressing issues of racism in Hollywood. Other publications mention the topic as a side note to social race relations. It is glaringly obvious that Black actresses consistently face obstacles, such as being too dark or too stereotypically Black. Sheryl Lee Ralph recalled a top white producer telling her, “You’re obviously beautiful and talented, but what do I do with a beautiful Black girl in a movie?”⁷⁷

Payne continues to argue, “Why wasn’t this producer and more serious transgressors named and interviewed and talked into revealing the history and psychosis behind their racial exclusivity? The answer, of course, would reveal too much about Hollywood, about Steven Spielberg and Jeffrey Katzenberg, about People magazine, about Disney, about America.”⁷⁸

What is most interesting about the arguments regarding Goldberg and other Black female stars engaging in love scenes, is that not one of the quotes, interviews, theories or analyses mentions that talent is the basis of the executive decision to exclude said scenes. The actress’ race and appearance is referenced but their talent is not. In conclusion, the lack of love scenes between Black female stars and White male stars is not due to talent but a result of the females’ natural physiognomy being much different from that of the non-Black female star. The Black females’ hair does not cascade over her pillow and shoulders as she

⁷⁶ Payne 100.

⁷⁷ “Upfront: What’s Wrong With This Picture? Exclusion of Minorities Has Become a Way of Life in Hollywood,” 78.

lies in the bed. The Black female is not milky white or alabaster. Just as the executive said to Goldberg, “What are we going to do with this (hair)?” A lack of understanding about the sexuality and attractiveness of the Black female perpetuates this issue. As stated in the previously mentioned interview with Deborah Norville, Goldberg still desires to have a love scene in a film. She would like to break the myth that the spectator is “not ready” to see her and a white actor in a love scene. Until she is accepted as she is and her innate beauty acknowledged, the audience will never be ready for a love scene between Whoopi Goldberg and Dustin Hoffman.

⁷⁸ Payne 100.

Chapter 4

EXAMINATION OF WHOOPI GOLDBERG'S SUCCESS IN AVOIDING STEREOTYPES

Indeed, cinematically she is not really constructed as a woman at all - neither nurturer nor siren...⁷⁹

Though previous discourse has used “type” and “stereotype” synonymously and/or supplementary, the terms are supplementary in this research. To clarify, the use of “type” in this chapter refers to the physiognomic qualities and acting style of the actress, not the character. “Stereotype” is defined as the prevalent images and representations of Black culture interpreted and presented by filmmakers.

Stuart states, “Whatever the seeming variety in black women’s roles, there have only really been two types of cinematic coloured girl. The first of course is Beulah, the woman whose heavenly charge was to keep those ‘beautiful white babies’ safe from harm. The other is Dorothy Dandridge, the Tragic Mulatto, a beautiful brown moth about to be singed in the dangerous fires of miscegenation.”⁸⁰

Beulah (also known as Mammy) and the tragic mulatto are the only two stereotypes recorded for Black women. Donald Bogle writes extensively of them in his texts, and the film *Ethnic Notions* features a section on the two categories. One new stereotype that has emerged in the 1990’s is the “Hoochie,” also known

⁷⁹ Stuart 12.

⁸⁰ Stuart 12.

as the “Skank.” This character is not restricted to black females in the general definition. She is classified as the “slut” stereotype in the non-ethnic realm. Nevertheless, the term “Hoochie” does specifically refer to a debased Black woman. This character will compromise ethics and morals if it will get her sex or money. These terms are included to provide a complete list of Black female stereotypes for thorough argument to determine Goldberg’s success in avoiding stereotypes. The Mammy and Tragic Mulatto are the most prevalent female stereotypes, but the Pickaninny and Coon are also apparent in film today.

The Mammy, as defined in chapter 2, is the caretaker and matriarch in the film. She is always in charge whether she is right or not. She is brash in her criticisms and usually the disciplinarian. The other form of the Mammy is the robust, soft surrogate mother. She is the one member of the group who understands everyone’s pain and takes it upon herself to serve as guide to enlightenment of self and self worth. This is evident in Hattie McDaniels Mammy in *Gone With The Wind*.

The Tragic Mulatto need not be thoroughly defined because Goldberg has not played the role of tragic mulatto. However, it is important to include a brief definition to give a full spectrum of existing stereotypes. The most reasonable explanation of how Goldberg has avoided this stereotype is that she is not the color of caramel. The Tragic Mulatto is a fair skinned Black female with fine features; most often her father is White and mother is Black. This character always appears to be delicate and in danger. Her life is tragic because she is can

not completely identify with one race. She is in perpetual racial limbo. She is not dark enough to be considered Black nor fair enough to be considered White. Because of this, she struggles with relationships and identity. Halle Berry's roles in *The Wedding* and *The Rich Man's Wife* are prime examples of this "type." It is essential that a fair skinned woman play the mulatto, due to the tragedy revolving around the lightness of her skin. Goldberg has avoided this stereotype, due to her not fitting the "type" rather than by her choice.

The next stereotype is the Pickaninny. This stereotype refers to children and is not gender specific. Goldberg, however, has displayed some of the Pickaninny traits in some of her roles. The Pickaninny is best described by Bogle: "Generally, he was a harmless, little screwball creation whose eyes popped, whose hair stood on end with the least excitement, and whose antics were pleasant and diverting. The slave child Topsy was presented as a lively Pickaninny, used solely for comic relief."⁸¹

The Coon is a recognizable Black male stereotype. The Coon is evident in Stymie from *Our Gang*, Axel Foley (Eddie Murphy) in the *Beverly Hills Cop* series, and other streetwise, cunning and immaculately dressed Black males. Nevertheless, Goldberg has portrayed the Coon stereotype in films such as *Burglar*.

Goldberg's film career began ten years after the Blaxploitation period (1970-1975). During this period, Black actors had many roles available to them in

⁸¹ Bogle, Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks 7.

Black films. Black versions of popular white films such as *Blackula* were quickly being made in abundance. Goldberg's acting career began on the stage in the early 70's and crossed over to film in 1985 when she did the HBO special *Whoopi Goldberg*. Following the special, she was cast as Celie in *The Color Purple* with the blessings of both Alice Walker and Steven Spielberg. She then made a few films in which she was the lead. The following year she was cast as the lead in several films: *Jumpin' Jack Flash* (1986), *Burglar* and *Fatal Beauty* (1987), *Clara's Heart* (1988), *The Telephone* (1988), and *Kiss Shot* (1989). Although she has made at least one film every year since her screen debut, it has been difficult for her to obtain the roles she truly desires. This difficulty is not a result of script availability or talent but more availability of role type. The May 1999 Screen Actors Guild casting report reveals that Blacks were cast in 13.4% of the acting roles in 1998 compared with 14.1% in 1997. This is the first year the Guild has seen a decline.

This chapter discusses whether Goldberg has broken "type." Has she obtained and portrayed roles different from her industry type? This chapter also examines Goldberg's choices in roles to determine if she has avoided stereotypical roles, as Stuart believes, or perpetuated them, as Bogle believes. In his text, Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks, Bogle devoted a 5-page section in Chapter 10 to Goldberg and her Academy Award winning performance in *Ghost*, pointing out the stereotypical signs of the film.

In order to discover whether Goldberg has overcome typecasting, two important factors must be established. Goldberg has a unique look and talent that seems to appeal to audiences, but she does not fit any industry type. The industry was not sure what to do with her. The uniqueness of Goldberg's look and vocal range is new and distinct. She lacks the fine features and straight hair of the Barbie doll starlet. She uses certain cultural rhythms and inflections (and language) unique to Black culture in most of her characters. A perfect example of the use of this code is in the film *Ghost*. Sam tells Oda Mae to, "Tell her [Molly] she's in danger." Oda Mae responds, "You can't just blurt it out like that. Molly, you in danger, girl!" Contrary to her preference, her physiognomy does have a direct effect in the roles offered. The fact that she is and resembles the stereotypical Black American does have an effect on the types of roles available and accepted.

Referring to Deborah Norville's previous quote, "This movie (Made in America) breaks type for you, because it's a romance." What is Goldberg's type? Before *Made in America*, the roles Goldberg chose were black-white "buddy comedies" (*Burglar*, *Jumpin' Jack Flash*, *Fatal Beauty*) or mammy/matriarch (*Corrina, Corrina*, *Clara's Heart*, *Sister Act*) films. Of the black-white buddy films as determined in Chapter 3, *Made In America* is a romantic comedy. Buffoonery interrupts the most romantic scene between Danson and Goldberg, which makes a mockery of the romance between the couple. The film did not actually break type for Goldberg. It was intended to be

a more dramatic comedy, but the love scene definitely established Sarah as awkward and lacking sex appeal.

The beginning of Goldberg's career established her type based on her one-woman show. Although *The Color Purple* was her first film and Academy Award nomination, the character of Celie has not reappeared. Goldberg's character Fontaine became a more acceptable presence in her films. Terry (*Jumpin' Jack Flash*), Rita (*Fatal Beauty*) and Bernice (*Burglar*) all possess Fontainisms in their respective films. The wit, intelligence, cunning and in-your-face attitude became a commonality. Asexual clothing costumes all three characters. When they do don dresses and high-heeled shoes, we see performance codes of discomfort. A limp in the stride, as if walking in someone else's shoes. They walk in an ungraceful manner with legs wide and arms set. Frustrated, they adjust the clothing by pulling on panty hose and skirts. The costuming is also gaudy and rough. In one scene of *Fatal Beauty*, Rizzoli dresses in a 50's style dress and wig, looking very innocent and naïve. However, her movements are not. This type survived a three-year hibernation and reappeared in *Ghost*. Conversely, in *Made in America*, Sarah Mathews is costumed in African styled clothing. It is loose and layered but does not resemble the asexual clothing of jeans and a sweatshirt. The filmic effect is the same in that her physique is hidden, desexing her, but it is hidden in a much more feminine and sophisticated manner. The Fontainisms do not appear in *Made in America*, and Goldberg does break type in that sense. Disagreeing with Norville, I do not think she breaks type in regards to romance

until *Corrina, Corrina*. Furthermore, the romancing of Rita Rizzoli, in Marshak's own tough guy way, is softer and more empathetic than the love scene in *Made in America*.

NEW STEREOTYPES SPECIFIC TO GOLDBERG

Goldberg has created (deliberately or not) two new stereotypes termed Doolittle and Fontaine. Doolittle is a combination of the performance codes of the Mammy and the Pickaninny. Because the Mammy is a female stereotype and the Pickaninny childish male, the combination creates an androgynous stereotype. The Mammy is desexed so as not to pose a threat to the mistress of the home (or plantation), whereas the Pickaninny is sexless due to the childish nature of the stereotype. This stereotype emerged in *Jumpin' Jack Flash*. Terry Doolittle is an excellent specimen, thus the term. Again, Goldberg crosses into the masculine Black stereotypes. *Jumpin' Jack Flash* presents her in the telephone booth and again in the computer room at the ball. This is also evident in her *Ghost* character Oda Mae Brown. Goldberg brings the wisdom, determination and presence of a Mammy to Oda Mae, but during the scenes when the camera focuses on her, there is an abundance of Goldberg comedy. The opening scene of *Burglar* presents the same. In a sense, these characters are the barefoot, chicken eating congressmen D. W. Griffith presents in the opening of *Birth of a Nation*. When the main White character is absent, the Black character(s) is presented as silly, goofy, uncouth and distracting. This method diverts from the humanity of the character and, indirectly, the actor for that moment. Guerrero states,

One reason for the contextual isolation of a black star or co-star is not hard to discern, simply because many of these vehicles were originally written for white stars, as was *Burglar* for Bruce Willis. A further implication of the narrative isolation of the black star involves the fact that they are

packaged the way Hollywood has always packaged stars, as supreme icons and incarnations of the rootless, decultured 'individual' in industrial consumer society.⁸²

⁸² Guerrero 126.

THE EFFECT OF STEREOTYPES

The filmic values of stereotypical characters create isolation or a distancing for the spectator. Rather than being involved in the scene, paralleling the emotion as Boorstin stated, the spectator is disconnected, disjointed. The buffoonery manipulates the spectator by evoking a sense of comedy and pulling away from a sense of love and passion. Sarah's femininity and humanity as a woman retract as soon as the front door opens in *Made in America*. The sharing of her secret with Mike humanizes Rita Rizzoli (*Fatal Beauty*), and they embrace. The fade into the scene that followed allows the spectator a moment to imagine what happened "that evening" as morning appears. Rizzoli's humanity and womanhood are maintained.

The Mammy performance codes are evident in her roles from the films *Clara's Heart*, *The Long Walk Home* and *Corrina, Corrina*. Those codes consist of the family caretaker or matriarch. The Mammy's responsibilities are to provide the family with physical, emotional and moral nourishment. These items are usually served with quick wit and criticism. As the maid from "another world, whether the world be the Black community, Jamaica or outer space," she teaches the family directly as a whole or through a sole member, her cultural ways. This consists of gestures and language, revealing to the spectator the dullness or misdirected ways of the family or member. *Clara's Heart* provides plenty of examples of this observation.



Figure 13 Hattie McDaniel (right) lords it over the other maids in Maryland (1940)

THE MAMMY

Physiognomically, Goldberg, along with her predecessors, fit the image of the Mammy: the defeminizing housedress, dark skin, wrapped or revealed kinky hair, and imposing stature. Goldberg's figure was quite slim and shapely in her early years, but her chosen style of dress was loose and camouflaged her femininity. She made several movies in which she appears in loose clothing, is the voice of wisdom, and reprimands Whites for being White and the bad guys for being bad. However, she believes, "We're defined by who we are, and if the stories that interest me happen to be about maids and nannies, then that's fine. I didn't give a shit that other black actresses thought it was degrading to have to

play a domestic, because they were wrong and I was right. I'm always right."⁸³ She later explains that the advisors on the set of *A Long Walk Home* were the original mammies and maids to the white community. They provided information regarding what society and life was like during that time. After receiving a rare and informal education, Goldberg had a different idea of what it took to be a domestic during the 1960's. "This is astonishing to me, and these women from Montgomery helped to bring the point home. I started to look on them as heroic. They kept the family together—theirs, and the upper class white families they were working for. Moreover, they survived. So what the hell was wrong with playing them? Nothing. Nothing."⁸⁴



Figure 14 *The Long Walk Home* video cover

⁸³ Goldberg 130.

A nun's habit replaces the housedress in *Sister Act*. The habit defeminizes as well as desexes Goldberg. The film begins with Deloris Van Cartier (Goldberg) singing songs of the 60's in a Reno Casino. The next scene shows Deloris with her married boyfriend Vince (Harvey Kietel) who happens to be white. Deloris does not have the Whoopi dreadlocks; she has a mane of frizzy natural looking hair, form-fitting colorful lamè dress, large dangling earrings, and make-up. A major difference in this film, unlike the previously discussed film, is that she still has the Fontaine mannerisms. The habit hides not only her hair but her figure as well. The first time she appears in the habit she says, "This is fine for covering a little bulge, but now I've got holster hips." Although Deloris Van Cartier has a romantic relationship, she is not presented as sexy. Additionally, the looseness and weight of the habit greatly reduces any remaining traces of her sexuality.

Guerro responds to her role in *Sister Act*, "In her endless narrative role as the expression of 'blackness' in a white milieu, Goldberg plays a missionary in reverse, bringing the gospel of black soul and spontaneity to the white natives of a sterile, cloistered nunnery."⁸⁵ This is also apparent in *Corrina, Corrina* and *Clara's Heart*. Again, she educates the family of Whites through Black traits: sayings, criticisms and correction. For instance, the choir is in desperate need of help. They sing off key and off beat, lacking rhythm and soul. Deloris saves the choir by showing them the way. When they sing during service again, they sing

⁸⁴ Goldberg 132.

in harmony and perform choreographed moves. While Berger Mother reminds her throughout the film to curb her urges to dance and sing, Deloris encourages the nuns to loosen up.

One evening, she sneaks out of the convent to a bar across the street, while still in her habit. She walks over to the bar to sit down, but a man sets his feet on top of the stool just before she is about to sit. She grabs him by the neck stating, "Young man, take your foot down off that stool. Now have a seat. Have a seat."⁸⁶ Again, she is the mother figure correcting people and demonstrating that she is in charge of the environment. She maintains the Mammy stereotype, overpowering the White male. The two sisters that follow her into the bar reveal their intrigue for the "other world." Again, as family members enter the world of Goldberg's character, they loosen up, and their "Inner Light" begins to shine brighter. In the scene before the bar, Sister Mary Roberts had revealed that she felt "she had something inside to share with others."⁸⁷

Using Fontaine as an "-ism" rather than the proper name gives clear understanding of performance codes specific to this original character. Fontainisms are derivatives of Goldberg's own creation, Fontaine, a character from her one-woman show. In *Fatal Beauty*, she is referred to by her last name, Rizzoli a code familiar in athletics and the military, both male dominated genres. This is another method of desexing the Black female character. At the conclusion

⁸⁵ Guerrero 194.

⁸⁶ Sister Act 1992.

⁸⁷ Sister Act 1992.

of the touching scene when she reveals that her baby girl discovered her stash of drugs and died, Marshak says in a sympathetic tone, “Rizzoli.”

WHY STEREOTYPES PERSIST

The stereotypes exist because they are usually the only roles available to Black women. These roles persist because the spectator accepts them. Black actresses are limited in what is available, so they accept what they would not accept under different circumstances. Regardless of audience pull and fame, black stars still do not have the power to change the continuation of stereotypes in film. Guerrero discusses the financial pull of black stars such as Wesley Snipes, Eddie Murphy and Whoopi Goldberg, stating, “All in their slightly different ways comfortably define black people within the norms and expectations of mainstream consumer entertainment.”⁸⁸

Being the most prolific genre that has continuously engaged black talent since the collapse of the initial Blaxploitation boom, black-focused comedies as well as black-white buddy comedies have established themselves as Hollywood’s other lucrative, if not its most lucrative, black-centered enterprise. Moreover, the 1990’s wave of black comedies has tended to express a broad number of related traits or thematic similarities, the most obvious of which has to do with the multivalent ways that black comedy provides a deflected, mostly non-threatening space within which America can tentatively engage its ubiquitous race problem.⁸⁹

Goldberg’s films are not necessarily wholly classified as comedies. The three films proceeding *The Color Purple* are classified as action/adventure films. The majority of Goldberg’s films are “safe.” Her characters are either paired with

⁸⁸ Guerrero 190.

⁸⁹ Guerrero 190.

a White "buddy" or presented in a way that distracts from their Blackness. This is especially prevalent in *Jumpin' Jack Flash*, *Burglar*, *Kiss Shot*, *Moonlight and Valentino* (1995), *Fatal Beauty*, and *Boys on the Side* (1995). These films could have all featured an actor of a different race. The only time Goldberg's Blackness is punctuated is during the comedic scenes. At that point, we see the Pickaninny-like facial contortions and vocal inflections and rhythms.

In *Clara's Heart*, *The Long Walk Home*, and *Corrina, Corrina*, we see an updated version of the mammy. Goldberg's role is the same in these three films: the maid. Although each film has its own unique story line, the characters Goldberg plays are basically the same. In *Corrina, Corrina* she is the housekeeper/nanny for Molly and Manny Singer. She wears the basic housedress with apron, modest hairstyle, and little make-up if any. She is the caretaker of Molly, the daughter, and teaches her about life, friendship, and love. As the film progresses Molly begins to live "black" culture, sing in the black church choir, and play with black children. In more than one scene, Molly is shown with Corrina cleaning houses. Molly is singing and dancing to soulful sounds with an Aunt Jemima styled scarf on her head. Lastly, while singing in the choir, Molly smiles broadly and with great enthusiasm proclaims to Corrina's niece, "I'm a nigger lover!"

In *Clara's Heart* Goldberg is the Jamaican housekeeper/nanny brought into the American household from her homeland. Again, she spends more time with the son, David (Neil Patrick Stewart), than the parents. She also teaches him

about life, friendship and love. David also experiences Jamaican life when Clara (Goldberg) takes him to get a hair cut at the Jamaican-run hair salon. He shows command of the dialect by showing off at the salon. Later he sings a Jamaican song at a Jamaican wedding.

In *Clara's Heart*, the parents are cold and emotionally absent from their son, David. Clara takes charge of David and raises him. She breaks him of his attitude and spoiled behavior. She brings him into her world of rules and morals, Jamaican culture, and strange but intoxicating slang. Eventually, David learns to respect Clara. The film goes as far as having David go head to head (playing the dozens) within the Jamaican community. Goldberg has taken the appearance, stature and rhythm of the mammy and combined it with the harmless diversions of the Pickaninny, thus creating a comical effect that no other Black actress has done.

In *The Long Walk Home*, she is the stereotypical maid and nanny to Sissy Spacek's family during the 1960's Montgomery bus boycott. Again, she has influence on the family. Sissy Spacek risks isolation and criticism from her culture to drive Goldberg to work. Although Goldberg doesn't care what other actresses think about the roles she accepts, she says, "I walked through the first few days of shooting thinking, 'If I'd been from this era, I'd have done this, and I'd have done that.' This was just a part. I'd do it like it was written, for the movie, but I needed to know how I would have done it for real."⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Parish, Whoopi Goldberg .

A stronger and more direct example of the Pickaninny is found in *Jumpin' Jack Flash*. Goldberg plays data entry clerk, Terry Doolittle who stumbles across an undercover agent who is trapped behind the Iron Curtain and needs her help to escape. Although the plot is that of a standard spy movie (though we do not see the spy until the very end), there is a comedic flavor throughout. Terry Doolittle, however, is androgynous. The only physical and environmental signs of femininity presented to the audience are in the one scene when she is dressed in a blue sequined evening gown, obtrusive wig and pumps. Unfortunately, the feminine image is destroyed when she whips out a tape player and claims she is “the talent” for the evening. The scene is suspenseful, but unlike a James Bond film, not sexy. Goldberg’s dress transforms into a sequined mini after it is accidentally ripped to shreds in a paper shredder. Her eyes pop, and her face grimaces as she plays tug-of-war with the shredder. As her dress is further sucked into the shredder her eyes dart from side to side, and she quickly looks around for the bad guys. Her actions are very similar to those of Buckwheat from *Our Gang*. During another point in the film, she is trapped in a telephone booth that is then dragged down the street. Again, the facial expression is exaggerated, and she screams and yells for help but in such a way that her pleas for help evoke laughter rather than suspense. Bogle compares her to Butterfly McQueen: “Here as she pops her eyes and screams like mad, she is not too different from the comically fearful Butterfly McQueen screaming that the Yankees is coming.”⁹¹

⁹¹ Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mammies, Mulattoes, and Bucks* 297.

These codes have changed slightly but continue to remain year after year. “For decade after decade, the Negro character was synonymous with ‘comic relief,’ diverting antics, crude dialect, and grotesque appearance-either physically or in terms of costume. Other stereotypes were being perpetuated simultaneously.”⁹² *Burglar* and *Ghost* both reveal these codes. *Burglar* features Goldberg in the beginning of the film dressed as an elderly lady to gain access to a home she is burglarizing. As she leaves, two security men approach, and she goes into flailing gestures and big eyes, stating the robbers went “that a way.”

The diverting antics, crude dialect and grotesque costumes prevail again in *Ghost*. The scene that introduces her as the “spiritual advisor” Oda Mae Brown, features her going through facial contortions as an imagined spirit inhabits her body. She wears a gold lamè robe, dangling earrings and straightened hair. Again, the spectator is reminded of her Blackness. Additionally, when she runs into the closet, fearful of Sam’s (Patrick Swayze) ghost, she screams, throws up her hands and rolls her eyes similar, again, to the Buckwheat character. She is so frightened she literally breaks down the door and runs out of the room “trying to get away from dis here ole ghost.”⁹³ As Bogle explains:

It is a very funny sequence. But the truth of the matter is that while we might have hoped that blacks terrified of ghosts would now be consigned to the era when Willie Best popped his eyes as Bob Hope’s servant sidekick in *The Ghost Breakers* in 1940, Oda Mae Brown is yet another readily excitable creature, often lit up with comic fear while operating in the realm of otherworldly spirits.⁹⁴

⁹² The Negro In American Culture 188.

⁹³ Bogle. Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks, 329.

⁹⁴ Bogle. Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks, 329.

Sam Wheat follows her home and tries to convince her that she should help him protect his love, Molly (Demi Moore). Sitting in her living room, she speaks to Sam's spirit, "You're white aren't you? I knew it!" A few scenes later she picks up a picture and asks, "Is this him? Is this you?" referring to Sam. "Hmm, cute. White, but cute." Lines like these are reminders that she is black. In any other film, if the roles were reversed, and Sam said, "Black, but cute," the black spectator might be offended. Nevertheless, Goldberg gets away with it. Fontaine can criticize white society in his direct manner without recourse, and that is what is repeated in *Ghost*. Further into the film, Sam asks her, "You got a nice dress?" The next scene is an aerial shot of the street and sidewalk downtown. A red clump moves through the gray suits.

Oda Mae: "I don't see what's wrong with what I'm wearing."

Sam: "Sorry I made a joke- I love your shoes."

Oda Mae: "I don't think you do."⁹⁵

Just as Oda Mae finishes her sentence, the shot changes to reveal Oda Mae and Sam turning a corner, giving the spectators a full view of her outfit. She is dressed in a red and black decorative suit and drawing unneeded attention to herself. The character goes as far as wearing white gloves, blue mules with white bows, and a red hat with black feathers and large dangling earrings. As she and Sam emerge from the elevator, he says, "I don't suppose I can talk you into losing

⁹⁵ *Ghost* (1990)

the hat.” The bank guard looks her up and down as if perplexed by her style of dress. Oddly, she walks normally in the shoes until she walks away from the nuns on the street after exiting the bank and storms off. She crosses the street, stomping with feet set wide and the usual football stature.

Another aspect of the Pickaninny /Mammy stereotype is the desexing of the men in the film. In *Burglar*, a criminal catches Goldberg listening at his door. He demands she tell him who she is and why she is lurking around his door. She decides to present herself as a smooth talking drug addict. The man catches her sneaking a peek at papers in his kitchen and is about to harm her. He grabs her by the throat, and she slowly sinks to the ground. Taking advantage of the position, she pulls her fist back and punches him in the crotch. This is similar to the meat freezer scene in *Fatal Beauty*. She instructs the chefs of a restaurant to hoist a pimp on a meat hook. She enters the locker and closes the door. The freezer serves as an interrogation room. Eventually, the criminals’ anger increases, and he calls her a bitch. Throughout the film, this word serves as a trigger, granting permission to punch, shoot, or kill the speaker. In another scene in *Burglar*, she is working in her bookstore when a crooked cop catches her off guard. He calls her a derogatory name; as in *Fatal Beauty* a word is motivation to attack. Bernice and the cop engage in physical fighting. She is, of course, triumphant. These scenes convey to the spectator that Goldberg is the dominant character in the movie. For a woman to overtake a man physically or mentally, symbolizes her as the controlling character, the star. In some instances one can argue that she is the

hero/heroine, but her plight is not one of a heroine or overcoming tragedy (like the tragic mulatto). By engaging in such confrontations she is brought to the same plane as the men. She is not frail or feminine in her movements. She is of equal or greater strength and intelligence. She does not use sexuality or feminine wiles to achieve her goal. Therefore, the confrontation is without sexuality and, as in *Burglar*, the men are in a sense symbolically castrated.

In 1995 Goldberg starred in *Boys on the Side* and had a supporting role in *Moonlight and Valentino*. Taking on the role of the wise and mature lesbian in *Boys* gave her an opportunity to create new dimensions that the spectator had not seen. Yet, the Goldberg element slips in and out of this film. At one point in the film, she states that Robin (Mary-Louise Parker) is “the whitest human in America.”⁹⁶ Again, Goldberg’s trademark for pointing out the whiteness of a character appears just long enough to remind us she is black and the other character is white. At the beginning of the film, “we’re anticipating this will be another one of those Goldberg roles [*Boys on the Side*] where she gives white folks lessons in Black appreciation.”⁹⁷

Considering the many films released in the last year, a very small percentage of them feature a Black female in the starring role. Goldberg has managed to appear in over 30 films and star in over 10 in 15 years. Goldberg commented on her contribution to preserving stereotypes in her autobiography,

⁹⁶ Roger Ebert “Boys On The Side”, Chicago-Sun Times On-Line Review. 3 Feb. 1995.

⁹⁷ Ebert “Boys On The Side”.

Book. “I sometimes wonder whether the choices I make as a black actress contribute in some way to the prevailing stereotypes, but then I realize it’s not all on me. I can take any role I want, or reject any role I want, for any reason I want.”⁹⁸ Goldberg takes complete responsibility for her choices, so it *is* all on her.

Goldberg again broke type and stereotype in 1996 by accepting a role from the opposite end of the spectrum in *The Associate* as Mr. Cutty, the white male executive. *The Associate* presents Goldberg as a successful businesswoman, Laurel Ayers, who loses her job after being setup by her trainee. To reestablish herself financially and in a twisted act of revenge, she invents a non-existent stock genius—Mr. Cutty. Eventually, the fabricated Mr. Cutty has to materialize. Laurel decides she must transform herself into an older white man to convince the public and private sector that Mr. Cutty is real. There are two very important aspects to consider. Laurel is portrayed as the victim who loses her job because she is a black woman. The second aspect to consider is Laurel’s portrayal of Cutty. In essence, Laurel is portraying Cutty from her bitter and vengeful perspective. It is a significant point to consider because Goldberg was not cast to portray a white man throughout the entire film. The latex and make-up that transformed Goldberg into a white male does not fool the spectator. The characters within the film are the spectators. And as the spectators, they are targeted to be fooled. This gender switching is very similar to Robin William’s

⁹⁸ Goldberg 130.

Mrs. Doubtfire and Dustin Hoffman's Tootsie. Although Julie Andrews's role in *Victor/Victoria* did the same, it had higher levels of complexities.

Film critic Roger Ebert described Goldberg's career best in a 1988 movie review:

It is easy to imagine she has been ill-served by her agents and advisers. She has been denied true relationships, except with weirdoes, strange neighbors, computer buddies and nerdy little boys. She is always the being from another planet. How come? She is not a conventional beauty, but I've always thought that her face and eyes and smile contained a warmth and personality that shone like the sun. We would believe it if a guy fell in love with her. Give her a normal human role. See what happens.⁹⁹

When Journalist Jill Kearney asked Goldberg if working in film made her more pragmatic, Goldberg responded:

I don't *know* Hollywood. So I will go in and say stuff to heads of studios that you're not supposed to that apparently you're not supposed to say. "Oh, why are you making these movies like this?" "I would like to make this movie." "I would like to work with this person. You interested?" "Why won't you let me read for this?" "I heard you won't let me read for this. Is this true?"¹⁰⁰

Goldberg's naiveté forced the studios to examine the limitations they were placing on some of the roles. She continues to maintain her individuality, refusing to conform to the Hollywood starlet.

⁹⁹ Roger Ebert, "Clara's Heart," Chicago-Sun Times On-Line Review, 21 Oct. 1988.

¹⁰⁰ Kearney 27.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

And perhaps, therefore, Goldberg is in a strange way, a hope for the future: a black performer whose black skin is an empty sign, like that of her white counterparts, that simply spells entertainment and does not carry with it the baggage of oppression or history.¹⁰¹

This project has revealed many new factors leading to Whoopi Goldberg's success. Her comedic style was observed and compared, her profilmic sexuality analyzed and discussed, and her ability to comply with, break and create stereotypes has been established. Ms. Goldberg has achieved solitary supremacy in the history of Black females in Hollywood and become a new kind of movie icon through her attitude and persistence.

Goldberg has continually insisted that she is not a comedienne. Analysis of her comedic style determined that she is an actress. She has achieved this goal by making dramatic films such as *In the Gloaming*, *Boys on the Side*, *The Color Purple*, *Ghosts of Mississippi* and *Corrina, Corrina*. *The Color Purple* was her first and most intense dramatic role. This film allowed the spectator to experience Goldberg strictly as a dramatic actress. *Boys on the Side* and *Corrina, Corrina* are also dramatic films, with tidbits of comedy sprinkled throughout. Goldberg is an actress who happens to be very good at performing comedy. Goldberg is funny. She has the talent and skill to make an audience laugh, but it does not necessarily classify her as a comedienne. One factor that has created this confusion is the media. Goldberg's name started to become familiar in the

entertainment community when she did *Whoopi Goldberg* in 1981. Because her show made the audience laugh, and she performed alone, the show was reported as stand-up comedy rather than a one-woman comedy show. Unfortunately, the media has great influence over the categorization of a star as comedienne or actress. However, this classification does not seem to have harmed her career. She has played funny, dramatic, biographical and fictional characters.

Her comedic style was also analyzed to determine if her style is unique or common. The conclusion is that her style is a unique blend of codes found in the styles of other performers. Like Lily Tomlin, Goldberg has created a battery of characters from which to choose. Her one-woman show demonstrates her ability to portray a range of characters with varied ages, genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicities, personalities and intelligence. However, unlike Tomlin, Goldberg chooses to do this without the use of make-up or costumes. After comparing Goldberg's style to Richard Pryor and Moms Mabley, it is concluded that Goldberg's style is similar in language, rhythms and relationships with the spectator. Both Goldberg's and Pryor's profilmic codes follow that of the Pickaninny and coon. The wide-open eyes and the overly expressive facial expressions when in a dangerous situation are very much like the stereotypes outlined in Donald Bogle's texts. Additionally, Goldberg's manner of fact delivery is much like Moms Mabley and the Mammy stereotype. What does make

¹⁰¹ Stuart 13.

Goldberg a new movie icon in regards to her comedic style is her adaptation of the male stereotypes, the coon, Pickaninny and the buddy/sidekick.

A second factor that confirms Goldberg as a new movie icon is her creation of Fontainisms and the female buddy/sidekick. The performance and physiognomic codes are referred to as Fontainisms. The Fontainisms derive from the character Fontaine from her one-woman show. The streetwise, college educated drug addict is presented as male, but played by a female. Because Goldberg maintains realism with the Fontaine character, it is easily acceptable that with a few minor adjustments Fontaine could easily be female. Fontaine is most evident in *Burglar* and *Fatal Beauty*. By combining the Fontainisms with the coon and Pickaninny codes, and comedy, Goldberg has created another new character, the Black female buddy/sidekick. The ‘buddy/sidekick’ is Fontaine as a sidekick to a male character such as in *Ghost*. This type has allowed her to cross over into masculine roles observed in *Jumpin’ Jack Flash*, *Eddie* (1996), *T. Rex*, and *The Associate*. Although Goldberg has filled stereotypical roles, she has also gone beyond “type” and established a new precedent. Films such as *The Associate* introduce new options for casting Black females. She used her physiognomic qualities, such as her sturdy build and the register of her voice, to create Cutty. Her efforts and success point out that the Mammy and Tragic Mulatto are no longer the only roles available to Black women.

The third factor determining Goldberg’s validity as a new movie icon is the presentation of Goldberg’s sexuality. The debate between Goldberg and the

producers continues to this day. She insists that anyone can be sexy just as they are, and the producers insist that the audience will not accept her as sexy due to her non-compliance to Barbie-doll starlet codes. The conclusion is that neither party is either right or wrong. Goldberg could change to conform to the starlet image. She could chemically straighten her hair, slenderize her physique, change her appearance by using make up or cosmetic surgery, and change her style of dress. She can easily make these superficial changes, yet she not willing to exercise this option. The true test of Goldberg's argument would be to present her as a character that is viewed as sexy within the world of the film. If the audience accepts this character as believable then Goldberg wins, if not she must keep trying to prove her argument. Additionally, the spectator has not had an opportunity to view her in a serious love scene. Doing so may humanize the character and allow the audience to see her in a sexy situation. The opportunity arose with *Made in America*. The audience might have bought into the idea that she can be sexy on screen, if the bumbling kissing scene with Ted Danson had been presented as romantic, soft and intimate. However, Goldberg has achieved stardom without being stereotypically sexy like Carole Lombard, Dorothy Dandridge, Halle Berry and others. Her success is based more on talent than image. This also qualifies her as a new movie icon.

The fourth determining factor is her racial self-identity. As proven in chapter four there are specific scenes in some of her films that remind the spectator that she is black. As discussed previously, *Ghost* and *Boys on the Side*

specifically mention ethnicity. The characters played by Goldberg blatantly introduce race in their dialogue. *Clara's Heart* and *Made in America* also highlight her Blackness. *Clara's Heart* does so in the beginning when the spectator first sees Goldberg as the maid. The narrative of *Made in America* highlights the difference between the ethnicity of two of the characters as part of the tension amongst three characters. The narratives from both films are based on the ethnic and cultural differences between her character and the other main cast members.

What is unique about her career is that not only did she obtain roles intended for non-black actors, such as Bette Midler for Deloris Van Cartier in *Sister Act*; but she also filled roles intended for men as well, such as Bernice, in *Burglar* for Bruce Willis. No other black female has accomplished such a feat. Goldberg's naiveté at the onset of her career actually served her well. It enabled her to challenge the "studio heads" as to why she cannot play this role or that role. She made them think outside of their categories

What is most interesting about Whoopi Goldberg's career is the psychology behind her choices. She has broken through many barriers, yet has not achieved her most desired goal: to appear in a love scene. Her determination to play "any" role has brought her a long way from the Helena Reubinstein Center but has not gotten her what she wants. Perhaps she is not willing to do what it takes to be cast and filmed in a love scene. She argues that as an actress, she should be considered for any role. However, types and standards have been

established by the film industry. There is an obvious stand off between Goldberg and the Hollywood heads; neither party seems willing to capitulate.

She does NOT want to be classified as an African-American actress or a comedienne. She just wants to be an actress. Unfortunately, human beings see her Blackness along with her talent; it is almost impossible to ignore it. It is also what afforded her the debut role in *The Color Purple*. Some stories are written about race and some are not. Goldberg insists that she be called an actress. This raises many questions to be answered by further research; does she want to be called 'actress' because the terms comedienne and African-American actress are not as popular as "actress"? When a precursor or category precedes the term Actress, does the actress that it applies to lose her credibility as an artist? Does it restrict her opportunities? In regards to her profilmic sexuality; Who will conform first, Goldberg or Hollywood? Does she really believe she should be granted these roles?



Figure 15 Whoopi Goldberg

Bibliography

Dissertations

- Burke, William Lee. "The Presentation of the American Negro in Hollywood Films, 1941-1961: Analysis of a Selected Sample of Feature Films." Diss. Northwestern U, 1965.
- Greadington, Barabara A Gant. "The Effect of Black Films on the Self-Esteem of Black Adolescents." Diss. U of Miami, 1977.
- Mapp, Edward Charles. "The Portrayal of the Negro in American Motion Pictures." 1962-1968. Diss. New York U, 1977.

Articles, Abstracts and Books

- "African-American--not!" Human Events 17 Oct. 1997. Online. EBSCOhost March 11, 1999: 32.
- "More Black Actors and Actresses are Getting Jobs in Television and Movies, Study Says." Jet 28 Oct. 1996: 61.
- "Up and Coming: with Gags, Gimmicks and Offbeat Props, a New Generation of Comics Shtiks it to Us on Their Way to Future Stardom." People Weekly 13 August 1984. Expanded Academic ASAP. Online. InfoTrac. April 5, 1999.
- "Whoopi Goldberg." People Weekly 28 May 1985. Expanded Academic ASAP. Online. InfoTrac. April 5, 1999: 45.
- "Whoopi Goldberg Cites the Painful Costs She Pays for Being an Individual," Jet (20 Oct. 1997): 64
- "Whoopi Goldberg: Second Black Actress to Win an Oscar in 52 Years." Jet 22 April 1991: 54 +.
- Armstrong, Linda. "Whoopi Goldberg Opens at James Theater in 'Funny Thing Happened.'" New York Amsterdam News 8 March 1997: 21+.
- Ascher-Walch, Rebecca. "Equal Opportunities." Entertainment Weekly 16 August 1996: 34 +.
- Barton, Robert. Acting: Onstage and Off. Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1993.

- Bell-Metereau, Rebecca. Hollywood Androgyny. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Bogle, Donald. Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1995.
- Bogle, Donald. Brown Sugar: Eighty Years of America's Black Female Superstars. New York: Harmony Books, 1980.
- Boorstin, Jon. The Hollywood Eye. Cornelia & Michael Bessie Bks/HarperCollins: New York, 1990.
- Brooks, Kenneth. African-Americans and Other Myths. Vallejo: Amper Publishing, 1994.
- Cagle, Jess. "Whoopi Goldberg's Duel with the Higher Powers at Disney Tested Everybody's Faith in 'Sister Act'," Entertainment Weekly: 2.
- Campbell, Bebe Moore. "Whoopi Talks B(l)ack." Essence January 1997: 56+.
- Carvell, Tim. "Moving Beyond 'Booty Call'; Stereotype-Free Black Films." Fortune 16 March 1998: 34 +.
- Chambers, Veronica, and Allison Samuels. "The Myth of Cinderella." Newsweek 3 November 1997: 74 +.
- DeLaria, Lea. "Whoopi Goldberg." Advocate 7 Feb. 1995. MasterFILE Elite. Online. EBSCOhost. 11 March 1999.
- Diones, Bruce. "Knockout." New Yorker 20 Oct. 1997: 252 +.
- Dunne, Sara. "Women as Children in American Comedy: Baby Snooks' Daughters." Journal of American Culture Summer 1993. MasterFILE Elite. Online. EBSCOhost. 11 March 1999.
- Dyer, Richard. Stars. Great Britain: BFI Publishing, 1992.
- Dyer, Richard. White. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Farley, Christopher Joh and Sylvester Monroe. "TV's Black Flight." Time 3 June 1996: 66 +.
- Foxx, Redd and Norma Miller. The Redd Foxx Encyclopedia of Black Humor. Pasadena: Ward Ritchie Press, 1977.

- George, Nelson. Blackface. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.
- Givens, Robin. "Why Are Black Actresses Having Such A Hard Time In Hollywood?" Ebony June 1991. INFOTRAC.
- Goldberg, Whoopi. Book. New York: Avon Books, Inc., 1997.
- Guerrero, Ed. Framing Blackness. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.
- Hagopian, Kevin. "Black Cinema Studies: Shadows and Acts". University of Memphis Journal of Communication Summer 1995: 177+.
- Howard, Lucy; Koehl Carla. "She's Ready for her Close-Up." Newsweek 5 May 1997: 8.
- Just Butcher, Margaret, The Negro in American Culture. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1971.
- Kearney, Jill. "Whoopi Goldberg: Color Her Anything." American Film December 1985: 25+.
- Kern-Foxworth, Marilyn. Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994.
- Kinnon, Joy Bennett. "Oprah, Debbie, Whitney & Tracey Sparkle in the Year of the ..." Ebony March 1998: 132 +.
- Lambert, Pam; Wright, Lynda; Brailsford, Karen; Dodd, Johnny; Cortina, Betty; Sales, Nancy Jo. "Up Front: What's Wrong With This Picture? Exclusion of Minorities Has Become A Way Of Life In Hollywood." People 18 March 1996: 42+.
- Mapp, Edward. Blacks in American Films: Today and Yesterday. New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1972.
- McGuigan, Cathleen. "The 'Whoopi' comedy Show" Newsweek March 1984: 63.
- Mobley, Jonnie Patricia, Ph.D. NTC's Dictionary of Theatre and Drama Terms. Chicago: NTC Publishing, 1992.
- Noel, Pamela; "Who Is Whoopi Goldberg And What Is She Doing On Broadway???" Ebony. March 1985: 26+.

Norville, Deborah. "Girl Talk With Whoopi Goldberg." McCall's June 1993: 119 +.

O'Sullivan, John. "Type Casting." National Review 13 October 1997: 8.

Okoampaahoofe Jr., Kwame. "Goldberg Lays It On The Line In 'Book'." New York Amsterdam News 27 November 1997: 30.

Parish, James Robert. Whoopi Goldberg. New Jersey: Carol Publishing Group, 1997.

Payne, Les. "An 'R' Rating Means Racism" Newsday 24 March 1996: 100.

People Weekly, May 28, 1985 Expanded Academic ASAP, Online, InfoTrac, April 5, 1999.

Roberts, Johnnie L. "Is Tinseltown Really Racist? Read On." Newsweek 18 March 1996.

Samuels, Allison; Leland, John. "Waiting to Prevail." Newsweek 12 Jan. 1998: 58 +.

Sinclair, Abiola. "Celebrity Watch." Amsterdam News 19 Oct. 1996: 26.

Valerie Smith, Representing Blackness: Issues in Film and Video New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1997: 1.

Sorenson, Jeff. Lily Tomlin: Woman of a Thousand Faces. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989.

Stuart, Andrea. "Making Whoopi." Sight & Sound. February 1993: 12+.

Walters, Ronald Ph.D. "Race in America; Multiculturalism, Afrocentrism, and the New Democratic Framework." Black Collegian April 1996: 32 +.

Whetstone, Muriel L. "Who will be Hollywood's Next Superstar?" Ebony March 1985: 28 +.

Reviews

Baltake, Joe, "Missed Opportunities Haunt Rob Reiner's 'Ghosts' Story." Ghosts of Mississippi. Dir. Rob Reiner. Sacramento Bee. January 3, 1997.

Ebert, Roger, "The Associate" Dir. Donald Petrie. Chicago Sun-Times. 1996.

- Ebert, Roger, "Bogus" Dir. Norman Jewison. Chicago Sun-Times. 1996
- Ebert, Roger, "Boys on the Side." Dir. Herbert Ross. Chicago Sun-Times. 1995
- Ebert, Roger, "Burglar." Dir. Hugh Wilson. Chicago Sun-Times. 1987.
- Ebert, Roger, "Corrina, Corrina." Dir. Jessie Nelson. Chicago Sun-Times. 1994.
- Ebert, Roger, "Fatal Beauty." Fatal Beauty. Dir. Tom Holland. Chicago Sun-Times. 1987.
- Ebert, Roger, "The Color Purple." The Color Purple. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Chicago Sun-Times. 20 December 1985.
- Gleiberman, Owen. "Ghost." Ghost, Entertainment Weekly Magazine. 13 July 1990.
- Gleiberman, Owen. "Walking Tall." The Long Walk Home, Entertainment Weekly Magazine, 18 Jan. 1991.
- Gleiberman, Owen. "Cushioned Whoopi." Sister Act, Dir. Emile Ardolino Entertainment Weekly Magazine, 1992.
- Schwarzbaum, Lisa. "Sexual Healing." How Stella Got Her Groove Back, Dir. Kevin Rodney Sullivan. Entertainment Weekly Magazine, 14 August 1998.

Appendix A

Films

Amazing Grace. Perf. Moms Mabley. 1947.

Boarding House Blues. Perf. Moms Mabley. 1948.

Boys on the Side. Dir. Ross. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg and Drew Barrymore.
Videocassette. Warner Bros., 1995.

Burglar. Dir. Hugh Wilson. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg. Videocassette. Warner Bros.,
1987.

Corrina, Corrina. Dir. Nelson. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg and Ray Liotta.
Videocassette. New Line, 1994.

Eddie. Dir. Steve Rash. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg and Frank Langella.
Videocassette. Hollywood Pictures, 1996.

Fatal Beauty. Dir. Tom Holland. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg and Sam Elliott.
Videocassette. MGM, 1987.

Ghost. Dir. Jerry Zucker. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg, Demi Moore and Patrick
Swayze. Videocassette. Paramount, 1990.

Ghosts of Mississippi. Dir. Rob Reiner. Perf. Alec Baldwin and Whoopi
Goldberg. Videocassette. Castlerock, 1996.

Harlem Nights. Dir. Eddie Murphy. Perf. Redd Foxx, Eddie Murphy, Della Reese
and Lela Rochon. Videocassette. Paramount, 1989.

Jerry McGuire. Dir. Cameron Crowe. Perf. Tom Cruise, Cuba Gooding, Jr. and
Kelly Preston. Studio-Columbia Tristar, 1996

Jumpin' Jack Flash Dir. Penny Marshal. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg and Bobcat
Goldthwait. Videocassette. Twentieth Century Fox, 1986.

Killer Diller. Perf. Moms Mabley. 1947.

Made in America. Dir. Richard Benjamin. Perf. Ted Danson, Whoopi Goldberg,
Nia Long and Will Smith. Videocassette. Warner Bros., 1993.

Moonlight and Valentino. Dir. David Anspaugh. Perf. Peter Coyote, Whoopi Goldberg and Kathleen Turner. Videocassette. Gramercy, 1995.

Mr. & Mrs. Loving. Dir. Richard Friedenberg. Perf. Timothy Hutton and Lela Rochon. 1996.

Romeo Must Die. Perf. Aayliah and Jet Li. 2000.

Sarafina! Dir. Darrell James Roodt. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg. Videocassette. Hollywood Pictures, 1992.

Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit. Dir. Bill Duke. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg. Videocassette. Touchstone, 1993.

Sister Act. Dir. Emile Ardolino. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg. Videocassette. Touchstone, 1992.

The Associate. Dir. Donald Petrie. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg. Videocassette. Hollywood Pictures, 1996.

The Chamber. Dir. James Foley. Perf. Chris O'Donnell and Lela Rochon. Videocassette. Universal Studios, 1996.

The Color Purple. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg and Danny Glover. Videocassette. Warner Bros., 1985.

The Long Walk Home. Dir. Richard Pearce. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg, Ving Rhames and Sissy Spacek. Videocassette. Artisan Entertainment, 1990.

The Rich Man's Wife Dir. Amy Holden Jones. Perf. Halle Berry. Videocassette. Buena Vista, 1996.

Theodore Rex. Dir. Jonathan Betuel. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg. Videocassette. New Line, 1996.

Vampire in Brooklyn. Dir. Wes Craven. Perf. Angela Bassett and Eddie Murphy. Videocassette. Paramount, 1995.

Whoopi Goldberg: Direct from Broadway. Perf. Whoopi Goldberg. Videocassette. HBO, 1985.